

representative power to which the more prudent forbearance of the Crown has never driven the House of Commons in England, and endeavoured to disable the whole machine of Government by a general refusal of the supplies.

It was an unhappy consequence of the system which I have been describing, that it relieved the popular leaders of all the responsibilities of opposition. A member of opposition in this country acts and speaks with the contingency of becoming a minister constantly before his eyes, and he feels, therefore, the necessity of proposing no course, and of asserting no principles, on which he would not be prepared to conduct the Government, if he were immediately offered it. But the colonial demagogue bids high for popularity without the fear of future exposure. Hopelessly excluded from power, he expresses the wildest opinions, and appeals to the most mischievous passions of the people, without any apprehension of having his sincerity or prudence hereafter tested, by being placed in a position to carry his views into effect; and thus the prominent places in the ranks of opposition are occupied for the most part by men of strong passions, and merely declamatory powers, who think but little of reforming the abuses which serve them as topics for exciting discontent.

Popular leaders
relieved of
responsibility.

The collision with the executive government necessarily brought on one with the Legislative Council. The composition of this body, which has been so much the subject of discussion both here and in the Colony, must certainly be admitted to have been such as could give it no weight with the people, or with the representative body, on which it was meant to be a check. The majority was always composed of members of the party which conducted the executive government; the clerks of each Council were members of the other; and, in fact, the Legislative Council was practically hardly any thing but a veto in the hands of public functionaries on all the acts of that popular branch of the legislature in which they were always in a minority. This veto they used without much scruple. I am far from concurring in the censure which the Assembly and its advocates have attempted to cast on the acts of the Legislative Council. I have no hesitation in saying that many of the Bills which it is most severely blamed for rejecting, were Bills which it could not have passed without a dereliction of its duty to the constitution, the connexion with Great Britain, and the whole English population of the Colony. If there is any censure to be passed on its general conduct, it is for having confined itself to the merely negative and defensive duties of a legislative body; for having too frequently contented itself with merely defeating objectionable methods of obtaining desirable ends, without completing its duty by proposing measures, which would have achieved the good in view without the mixture of evil. The national animosities which pervaded the legislation of the Assembly, and its thorough want of legislative skill or respect for constitutional principles, rendered almost all its Bills obnoxious to the objections made by the Legislative Council; and the serious evil which their enactment would have occasioned, convinces me that the Colony has reason to congratulate itself on the existence of an institution which possessed and used the power of stopping a course of legislation that, if successful, would have sacrificed every British interest, and overthrown every guarantee of order and national liberty. It is not difficult for us to judge thus calmly of the respective merits of these distant parties; but it must have been a great and deep-rooted respect for the constitution and composition of the Legislative Council, that could have induced the representatives of a great majority to submit with patience to the impediment thus placed in their way by a few individuals. But the Legislative Council was neither theoretically unobjectionable, nor personally esteemed by the Assembly; its opposition appeared to that body but another form of official hostility, and it was inevitable that the Assembly should, sooner or later, make those assaults on the constitution of the Legislative Council which, by the singular want of judgment and temper with which they were conducted, ended in the destruction of the Provincial Constitution.

Collision also with
the Legislative
Council.

From the commencement, therefore, to the end of the disputes which mark the whole Parliamentary history of Lower Canada, I look on the conduct of the Assembly as a constant warfare with the executive, for the purpose of obtaining the powers inherent in a representative body by the very nature of representative government.

Purposes of the
Assembly.