

New Jersey, South Carolina, Wisconsin. The power to summon the Legislatures within the year does not seem to be conferred on the Governors of New York and Rhode Island.

It is worthy of remark that the principle of Annual Meetings of the Representatives of the People is still cherished in those older and greater States in which the problem of self-government was first propounded, and was soonest solved. The Commonwealths of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and South Carolina, have continued to adhere to the principle of Annual Sessions, which is as old as the Third Edward. The experience of these States in the practical working of Representative Institutions—ranging, in some cases, over a period of more than two-and-a-half centuries—ought to be taken into account when weighed against the experiments of younger members of the same Federal family. But, with respect to these younger members, it is only justice to observe that, as has been already shown, the great majority of them stand prepared, when occasion demands it, to set aside the principle of Biennial Sessions.

It would appear that, on the whole, the principal reason for adopting the Biennial System was that of economy. There is also ground to believe that the Governors of those States, for their own political convenience, were in its favour. Under the American system, any member of a State Legislature may introduce a measure, no matter how crude and objectionable it may be. He may do this to carry out an unreasonable promise exacted by an unreasonable constituency. In the absence of a Responsible Ministry, the burden of rejecting such a measure, falls on the Governor of the State. To veto the measure might compel him to act against a section of his own political supporters. He would, therefore, naturally favour Biennial Sessions as bringing him less frequently than An-

nual Sessions, into possible collision with his political friends.

But the tide of Constitutional change, in the Biennial States, seems to be on the turn. There are many indications that it will soon sweep, in full and unchecked flow, toward the old and time-tried Annual System of legislation.

A local contemporary,* of a recent date, says:—

‘Within the last couple of years, thirty-one States of the Union decided upon holding Biennial Sessions; and, in many cases, says the *New York Tribune*, without due consideration. Now, when the new system is found to cause inconvenience, there is a growing demand for a return to the old system. Even Vermont, which seemed to be the most favourable for trying the experiment, on account of the stability of its population, is considering the question of going back to Annual Sessions. Our contemporary is of opinion that the new system has not had a fair trial.’

In reply to this observation of the *Tribune* there is an easy answer. If the new Biennial System, in the short space of two years has proved so barren of anticipated benefits as to lead to a demand for a return to Annual Sessions, then the Biennial System is impracticable. That it has failed in States so accustomed to the working of the machinery of Representative Government as are those of the American Union is a lesson for other free communities which may be standing hesitant on the verge of perilous experiment.

It has been said by those who advocate the Biennial System that it has the effect of preventing the introduction of immature and unnecessary legislation. But, under the British system of Responsible Government, this contention is of no weight. The existence of the Executive depends

* *Toronto Mail*, February 17, 1881.