

HON. MR. ROSS—That was a legislative union, while in this the representation will be based on population.

HON. MR. SEYMOUR—That does not affect the case. After the Irish union was effected, what was the representation of Ireland in the House of Commons? It was 100 members in a total number of 656; and in the House of Lords 28 Peers, in a House of 450 members. And although it was considered by England an absolute necessity that the union should be brought about, she did not give a preponderance, and scarcely a fair share, of the representation to the sister kingdom.

HON. MR. ROSS—That is because in the English Parliament they do not recognize the principle of representation by population.

HON. MR. SEYMOUR—My hon. friends will say that this proposed change is neither American nor English.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS—It is Canadian. (Hear, hear.)

HON. MR. SEYMOUR—No, it is neither one nor the other; it is a mongrel Constitution. (Laughter.) In England no important change in the laws is ever carried without being discussed in Parliament, session after session, followed by an appeal to the people upon it. Even so important a change—or what would, in comparison with this scheme, be here regarded as so unimportant a change—as the extension of the franchise has been discussed in Parliament for years, and submitted to the people before passing into law. Now, I would like to enquire of honorable gentlemen, what are the legitimate functions of the Legislature of this country. Do we not assemble here for the purpose of enacting good and wholesome laws for the people? (Hear, hear.) Those laws may be repealed, if they chance not to meet public approval; but here you propose to change the Constitution—to change the whole fabric of society—in fact to revolutionize society, without asking the consent of the people, and without the possibility—at any rate, the reasonable possibility—of this important change ever being reconsidered. Does not this important subject affect every freeman in the country as much as it affects us, and are there not thousands of people in the country who have as great an interest in it as the members of the Executive Council of Canada? And yet forsooth these gentlemen prepare a scheme, bring it down to this House, and tell the representa-

tives of the people that they are not at liberty to ascertain the wishes of the people respecting it, nor to alter it in any manner, but must take it as it is. Still we are told, notwithstanding all this, that this is freedom, and that we are a free people.

HON. MR. CAMPBELL—You are at liberty either to accept or reject it. (Hear, hear.)

HON. MR. SEYMOUR—Well, that is all very well, but we are told we must accept the scheme as it is; and all the influence that the Government can use—which I fear will be successfully used—(hear, hear)—will be employed to carry it through without the people having an opportunity of saying yea or nay upon it. We are told it is not British to permit this—even to pass a short act allowing the people to vote upon it; but if this is not British, neither is the proposition itself. (Hear, hear.) I entreat honorable members not to pass a measure of this importance without delaying it some little time, at all events, for the purpose of obtaining an expression of public opinion upon it. The people who are to be governed by it, who are for all time to come to live under this Constitution, certainly have a right to be consulted before it is consummated; and for the special well-being of the country, I hope and trust it will not pass without affording them that opportunity. (Hear, hear.)

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THURSDAY, February 16, 1865.

HON. MR. SIMPSON said—I think it was said by a wise man that there is nothing new under the sun. But had Solomon the scheme now before the House presented to him, he would probably have changed his opinion. Possibly nothing new can be said on the subject of representation by population, or even on the scheme now before the House; but representing, as I do, one of the largest and wealthiest constituencies in Upper Canada, I think it necessary for me to give my reasons for the position I have felt it my duty to take in reference thereto. It has been stated that the elections which have lately taken place have gone in favor of the Government; but, even if such were the case, how could it possibly be otherwise seeing that men of all shades of politics have united in forming a happy family. We have seen those who have been for almost a life-