

the executive council also, with the addition of the Lieutenant Governor and superintendent of education. It was suggested last session that we should add these two gentlemen to the council here, but we declined, and I have no hesitation in saying we did so for reasons which were substantial and valid. In the first place I hold, notwithstanding the example of New Brunswick, that it is unconstitutional for the Lieutenant Governor to occupy the position of chairman, inasmuch as he becomes personally implicated in the management of matters which, I consider, are not only of the most delicate and onerous character, but for which the people of the country have a right to hold somebody directly responsible. Suppose a question which has created a great deal of sectional difficulty, touching Education, was brought up in this Council of Public Instruction, what takes place? The Council have to deal with it in the only way that is practicable where there are a number of minds holding various opinions, that is, be guided by the majority. The Lieutenant-Governor sits in the chair,—a controversy arises of an exciting character,—a tie occurs, and a vote is taken,—what then? The vote of the Lieutenant-Governor decides the question; but herein lies the difficulty: It is in the power of any member of this House to rise and ask for the minutes of that Council, and on their production to show what the action of the council has been, and the constitutional dilemma would have been exhibited, of the Lieutenant-Governor, standing high above all parties, discharging functions similar to those which which Her Majesty discharges in relation to the British parliament, held directly responsible for that act. It may be said that this is an extreme case, but nevertheless it is one perfectly natural, but involving a constitutional difficulty such as would warrant any Lieutenant-Governor refusing his sanction to a bill which placed him in such an equivocal position. It would be also a most unwise and inconvenient step to make the superintendent of education a member of this council. He, like every other public officer in the country, is responsible to the people for his acts, but not directly so; and the mode in which you reach such an officer is as you reach a commissioner of mines, through the government. There is no power in this house to change a public officer except by changing the government; and, therefore, anything that would place a subordinate officer in the position to overrule (as he would be able to do) what would be otherwise a majority of the government, would be inconsistent with our practice, and extremely unwise in its effect. The superintendent of education should be in a position to give the best aid in his power and to carry out the requests of the government in such a way as should devolve the responsibility, not directly upon himself, but upon them. I have no hesitation in saying that the experience of the past year has confirmed me much more strongly in the opinion I held, that the best body which could be obtained in the province of Nova Scotia to deal with the great question of education is the executive council, and the bill which is now submitted to the house will embrace that provision.

It has been contended that the number of inspectors was too large—that the duties could be performed more efficiently by a smaller

number, who could be selected with a regard to their high qualifications, and could give their whole attention to the important matters entrusted to them. There will be hardly a member found who will deny that if there is to be anything like an efficient system of education, its very life and soul must be found in an able and vigorous inspection of the schools of the country. I will not, therefore, discuss the question as to the necessity that exists for the appointment of inspectors; but I may state that the Government are bound to accept the suggestions of hon. gentlemen, whatever their political opinions may be, especially when experience has proved that they are based on sound premises. Having had some months' experience of the bill, I think in this particular it may be modified to some extent, though I believe that it would have been very difficult to have organized our school system, unless there had been a school inspector in every county. This bill will provide that instead of an inspector for each county, there will be seven for the Province, or one to 200 sections. This provision will enable us to retain men of qualifications requisite for the onerous position of school inspectors, since they will receive such an amount of salary as will remunerate them sufficiently for giving their whole time and attention to their duties.

The House may decide what shall be the character of the Council of Public Instruction, or what the number of inspectors should be—it might sweep away the system of County Academies; and yet the fundamental principle of this measure would not be touched. All these are matters of detail in reference to which every gentleman is invited to express his opinions fully; but the fundamental principle of the bill is what is contained in the act of last session—that is, the great principle of FREE SCHOOLS. That is the fundamental principle, and in order to carry it out, I know of no other means by which it can be accomplished than assessment—the principle of recognizing the duty and obligation which the property of the country owes to the education of the people; and this principle will be found not only to be contained in this bill, but advanced to a more stable foundation than in the measure which received the sanction of the Legislature a year ago. A great deal of difficulty has arisen from the fact that the people in the various sections were invited to come together and say whether they would organize a school or not. Conflict was, as it were, invited between those who favored, and those who opposed assessment. Therefore, whilst it is desirable to retain in the hands of the people as much power as possible in reference to taxation, I feel that the sentiments of some gentlemen opposite, in respect to this measure a year ago, have been proved to possess a great deal that was sound and worthy of the attention of the house. The hope was that the inducement that was held out to adopt the principle of assessment would be such as to induce the people to come forward and adopt the principle. Under the operation of the law there are a great many instances in which this conflict of opinion has resulted, that a bare majority in a school section have refused to organize, and have left a large minority sincerely desirous to have a school without one. We believe it is necessary that whilst going as far as the house can possibly—as far as the go-