

haps. I said a moment ago that the electors of St. Damase were taken by surprise. I met one of the most active leaders of the Conservative party in that parish no later than Saturday last in my office, and on my telling him that there was a project of annexing the parish of St. Damase to the County of Rouville, he answered that if a meeting was called, there would be a unanimous protestation against the project. I will draw the attention of the Minister of Customs and the Minister of Public Works to the fact that by detaching from the county the parishes of St. Damase and Ste. Magdeleine, they remove the two parishes nearest to the township of St. Hyacinthe. St. Damase is barely four miles from the limits of the town, and Ste. Magdeleine is also a short distance from St. Hyacinthe. It seems to me that the Government could have left the map of that electoral district as it was before. We had an ardent enough fight when we were defeated at the last provincial elections. If the majority of the electors of the county are in the future to pronounce in favour of our hon. friends of the right, why, I ask, should the present boundaries of St. Hyacinthe be changed, and why should two parishes be annexed from the other side of the Richelieu River, which are part of the judiciary district of Montreal? We have no communications with the annexed parishes, and unless the Government, in their munificence and liberality, give us subsidies for the building of a bridge, we will have to pass by Belœil, and travel a distance of thirty or forty miles to reach these parishes. According to the last census the population of the County of St. Hyacinthe was 21,423. Now, Mr. Chairman, if you refer to the census figures, to find out the increase of the population of the town of St. Hyacinthe itself, you will see that it is a town of progress and industry. I will note here that the Minister of Public Works gave, as a reason for not joining the Counties of Soulanges and Vaudreuil, that the population of these two counties could increase in the near future. I have no hesitation in saying that St. Hyacinthe is one of the most progressive towns in the Province of Quebec, one whose industries are the most prosperous, not on account of the policy of the present Government, but thanks to the liberality of the citizens of that town, who on all occasions were ready to use their money to bring about that result. Here, Mr. Chairman, are figures which will not fail to interest the House, and to which I particularly draw the attention of the Minister of Public Works and of the member for Bagot. The increase of the population of St. Hyacinthe has been considerable, as I will show. At the taking of the census of 1861 it was 3,746. In 1881 it had reached 5,321, and in 1891, the last census found it 7,016. I am informed, and I have reason to believe it to be true, that, according to the census recently made by the municipal authorities, the figure of the population of St. Hyacinthe is now a few hundreds above that of 7,016. This increase is due to the enlightened, wise and intelligent policy of the town council, which I know is not approved by all—a policy which consists in attracting as much as possible from the neighbouring manufacturing centres, industries which make the wealth of St. Hyacinthe. Just now there is a large building in course of construction in St. Hyacinthe. It will soon be occupied by a business which cannot fail to grow into importance. I refer to the manufacturing of corsets.

Mr. BERNIER.

This industry was formerly established at Sherbrooke, and we have succeeded in bringing it to us. The town of St. Hyacinthe has not hesitated at sacrifices, and voted a large sum to induce those at the head of this industry to settle there. And that it did without minding whether those thus favoured were Liberals or Conservatives. The manager of this industry is well known to the member for Bagot (Mr. Dupont) as he is one of his cousins, Mr. Gendron. This gentleman, as the member for Bagot knows well, is one of the most faithful, if not the most ardent of Conservatives. Again, another industry which is now established in the County of Missisquoi, will be located with us before another year, I hope. All these industries will tend to increase the population. But let us take the population of the county as it now is. We already reach the standard. Taking this into consideration, should we not be justified in thinking that the Government should not make any change in the boundaries of the county? If by the side of this consideration you put the argument used by the Minister of Public Works setting forth that the Counties of Soulanges and Vaudreuil should not be united because their population was apt shortly to increase, should we not be doubly justified in expecting no changes to be made? In ten years from now the population of that town may be 30,000. I do not say that it may not be necessary in the future to make some changes, but at present I see no good reason for any. Moreover, Mr. Chairman, I draw your attention to the fact that St. Hyacinthe is the twentieth county, by order of population, in the Province of Quebec, and that there are forty odd whose population is smaller. Why, then, mangle this electoral district as is done? After having detached two parishes from St. Hyacinthe, they add to it two others from another county. As I have said before, the population of St. Hyacinthe is 21,423. Two parishes are added to the county: that of St. Marc, with 897 souls, and that of St. Antoine, with 1,473. By this operation the population of the county is increased by 2,370. But, after this addition, a subtraction is immediately made of two parishes formerly belonging to St. Hyacinthe, with a population of 936. Deducting this figure from the population of the annexed parishes, we remain with an increase of 1,434, which will bring the total population of the county to 22,867. In a party light the parish of St. Damase has not always been faithful, and under the pretext of drawing a straight line, the Government propose to the House to take away this parish. It is a singular fact that it is only in St. Hyacinthe that the Government shows so much affection for the straight line; elsewhere they prefer the crooked. If you want to draw a straight line why not likewise take away the parish of St. Charles? It must be well understood, Mr. Chairman, that I do not ask for such a change; but I simply say, that if a straight line is wanted, and a symmetrical shape for the County of St. Hyacinthe—a consideration which did not move the Government in the matter of the other counties—they must likewise take away this parish. I would be the last man to vote for the annexation of St. Charles to another county, as I would be the last one to vote for the taking away of other parishes which the Government want to detach from St. Hyacinthe. I understand that for