

first Colony claiming the privileges held out by the Imperial Parliament was the Colony of Australia, and the provisions contemplated were made especially with a view to meet the desire of the Eastern Colonies, that they might be enabled to have any measures which they might wish to take for local defence placed in connection with the Mother Country. There could be no question at all that the scope of the legislation referred to in the papers would be to enable the Provinces to avail themselves of an opportunity of contributing to their naval defence, and the scheme was in extension of the system which had been in operation in the British Navy, viz., that of having a class of persons not immediately in the Navy, but in a position to be called on to take part in such defence when required. He agreed, however, in thinking that this was a very broad hint and a very leading suggestion as to the duty incumbent on us to aid the Imperial Government in the defence of the Empire.

Mr. ARCHIBALD asked whether the Prov. Secretary was in a position to state to the House the regulations in reference to the Naval Reserve of Great Britain.

Hon. PROV. SEC'Y replied in the negative, remarking that he had not given the subject a very close attention, believing this Province not at present in a position to act upon the suggestions.

Mr. ARCHIBALD said, that in view of the fact that the time might be approaching when it would be necessary for the Province to make some such effort as that referred to, it might be well for the Legislature to avail itself of the advantages conferred by the Imperial Act.

#### PICTOU RAILWAY.

Hon. PROV. SECRETARY—I beg leave, Mr. Speaker, by command of his Excellency, to lay upon the table of the House copies of correspondence relating to the extension of the Pictou Railway, and I am anxious to avail myself of the first opportunity to bring them to the notice of the House. It will be remembered that the Legislature of the country entrusted to the Government the construction of the line from Truro to Pictou Harbor. The subject had for a long time engaged the attention of the House, and the party now in power, when in and out of office, had again and again pledged itself to proceed with the extension as soon as the country was in a position to command the requisite funds without material injury to its credit. When, therefore, the Government devolved upon the gentlemen now engaged in the administration of public affairs, and when they were enabled to meet the Legislature under financial circumstances which bound them to fulfil those pledges, they considered it incumbent upon them to carry forward that Railway with all possible despatch. I may say frankly to the House that the policy of constructing Railways by Governments was not our policy, and that all the experience which I have had in office, and all the observation which I have had an opportunity of bestowing upon affairs when in opposition have tended to convince me that such construction is not the legitimate province of the Government or the most desirable mode of extending the public works. But the policy having been adopted by the country, the Government did not find themselves in a position

to make a choice, but were obliged to carry on the work by the best means in their power.

The House will recollect that when it was proposed to give to companies authority to construct the lines objections were made to the Pictou line being included in the provision on the ground that embarrassment might arise from having one portion of the line under Government control and the other portions under the control of companies, and it was accordingly struck out. One of the greatest objections that I have always felt existing to the construction of Railways by a Government arose from the fact that it is a business in which they must be compelled to rely for information and guidance on persons outside the administration itself, the Government being thereby placed in the difficult position of having to expend large amounts in connection with undertakings on which their own information is limited and for the success of which they must be dependent on the judgment and opinions of those whose services they may engage. The decision having been arrived at by the House that such a system should be adopted, the Government felt that the only means by which they could discharge the great responsibility resting upon them would be by obtaining the services of an independent engineer of known character for integrity and skill, because on that officer they must very largely depend. In the selection of Mr. Fleming, the person employed as Chief Engineer, they believed and still believe, that they accomplished the duty of securing the most competent and able officer whose services could be obtained. It will be remembered that shortly after the formation of the present Government I had to proceed to Canada, in connection with the Provincial Secretary of New Brunswick, for the purpose of arranging for a survey of the Intercolonial Railway. When we arrived in Canada, and placed ourselves in communication with the existing Government of that country, and asked them who was to be selected as the engineer on their behalf, (it being agreed that one engineer should be nominated by Canada, another by New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and another by the Imperial Government), they stated to us their intention of appointing Mr. Sanford Fleming. Being unacquainted with the position which this gentleman held in Canada, we felt it our duty to place ourselves in communication with gentlemen in opposition, — and if there ever was a time in the history of that country when parties were in great antagonism, it was when the McDonald-Dorion Administration was opposed by the McDonald-Cartier Opposition, as I may call it; when we named the gentleman selected by the Government, and asked his character and standing, and enquired whether there was any reasonable ground of objection to the selection, the reply was that Mr. Fleming's standing and character were such that if the government had been in their hands he was the first person to whom they would apply. Mr. Tilley and myself, having gained all the information that we could gather from every source, applied to Mr. Shanley, a gentleman now in Parliament, and he not only declined himself to undertake the duties which we wished discharged, but fully confirmed the opinion we had already received respecting Mr. Fleming. The result was that we came to the conclusion of naming Mr. Fleming as the