

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The resolution relating to the Legislative Council reproduce the idea which I expressed on many previous occasions, more especially in 1883. I declared in the House that on principle I was favorable to the abolition of the Council, but that such a reform should not be effected until it was demanded by the people. That is precisely what is proposed by the Conference and if that amendment be adopted, the constitution of the Council will not be changed or its abolition effected except in accordance with an address from the Legislative Assembly, supported by at least two thirds of the people's representatives. The resolution of the Conference, it must not be forgotten, is permissive, not imperative, and consequently nothing obliges the Government or the Legislative Assembly to take any action in the matter, at least for the present.

VETO POWER

As the aim of the Conference was to find means to maintain intact the provincial autonomy, we naturally were concerned about the power of disavowing provincial laws, a power so unjustly exercised for the last few years by the Federal Government. Carried away by party spirit and the mania for centralization, the Ottawa Government, on many occasions too well known to need special mention here, has interfered with the action of the Provincial Legislatures, and encroached upon the domain of their jurisdiction, by disavowing laws passed by these Legislatures, though fully within the scope of their attributes, or by legislating on matters within the province of the Local Legislatures. It is undoubtedly true that on many points, for instance, the License Law, the Privy Council has checked those encroachments and has decided in favor of the Provinces; but during all these law proceedings the Local Governments have lost considerable revenue, and it must therefore be apparent to all men of sense that it is a matter of the greatest importance to put an end to a state of things, which is so prejudicial to every interest and so dangerous to provincial autonomy.

In order to mislead public opinion and to prejudice it against the work of the Conference, the meaning of the resolutions relating to disavowals has