

Mr. MACLENNAN would not oppose the amendment to the Small Debt Act, if he considered that it was called for, or if it had been asked for by petitions from the people. He was sorry the hon. member from Tryon was not in his place to favor the House with his opinion. A few days ago, a very important Bill came in from Charlottetown, but it was laid aside because there was not time to go into it. But now when we had no petitions praying for this measure—except from fifty or sixty petitioners—praying for new Courts, the Government could find time to amend the Small Debt Act. He did not believe there was any necessity for going into it now. He never held an office of emolument of any kind, and no change which the Government could make would effect him personally. He believed the Court in his district was giving satisfaction, and he did not think that the hon. member from that part of the County in the Government could name three gentlemen who would be more acceptable to the people. The Bill was not required, and therefore he would vote against it.

Hon. Mr. HOWLAN.—Why did the hon. member for Summerside recommend the removal of the Commissioners who had been appointed by the Liberal Government? The question now before the House was not whether there was, or was not ability in the gentlemen now acting as Commissioners. These courts were a kind of training schools for certain men, and doubtless some were much better qualified for the discharge of these duties than others. Various reasons had led him to the conclusion, that, as a general rule, eight years were as many as it was proper to leave some of these men in office. If no men could be found outside to fill these offices, there might be some force in those arguments, but when it was known that anything but efficiency had led to the appointment of some of the present Commissioners, the arguments of the members of the Opposition fell to the ground. The Government was always held responsible for these appointments, and therefore to a certain extent, they were political. He did not doubt that the hon. member for Summerside might suppose that the gentlemen now filling the office there were competent, but would the hon. member tell him, that they were the only three men there competent for Commissioners? But the present Government had good men outside; yet, after all, where was the party who could wholly divest themselves of party feelings? It was different in the old country. There everything was upon a larger scale. Magistrates were a different class of men, and they could be appointed as they were required; but the Commissioners of Small Debts were confined to a certain number. He did not hold to the principle of choosing men from among their political opponents. A Government should choose their officers from the ranks of those who supported them.

Mr. McNEILL would be the last person who would go for removing Commissioners, unless there was good cause for doing so. He knew that it was but reasonable to suppose that the Opposition would like to keep their friends in power; but then as the people had lost confidence in them and their friends, and also, in these courts, it was now the duty of the Government to change them. And as the people had lost confidence in so many of these courts, the duty of the Government was to remove the Commissioners from their present position, and appoint others.

Hon. Mr. HENDERSON.—It was admitted that when Responsible Government was established the Small Debt Commissioners were changed by the Liberals, and that their practice was followed by their successors.

And now it came to the Liberals' turn again to pursue the same dismissing course. With such an infusion of new blood as that party now had, it lay in their power to make quite an unusual change in these courts. And what more honorable than for them to do so. They had as many as three elements in their body. They would not deny but that party views, and interests were the objects they had in view in the first case, and now if they made a wise and proper use of their power, and appointed men from the different parties of which they were composed, they would not be sorry for taking so wise a step. As to the Clerk referred to, he thought the power of the Government was not so low, as that it required a change of the law to effect such a small matter. If that Clerk was to treat him, as he heard he had treated others, he would have had him removed if he could, and he was satisfied the court had this power. The hon. member for Tignish had said, that it was a kind of training school; but he would like to know for what?

Hon. Mr. HOWLAN.—In efficiency for the honorable discharge of such duties. Why, carpenters had gone on the bench and had risen to be active and discreet judges in these positions.

Hon. Mr. HENDERSON, as a general rule, would limit the training process as much as possible. He voted for the establishment of a court at Montague Bridge, and was in favor of the general principle. But still, knowing that there were men who would work for office, and that the Liberals were likely to choose some of them he was not altogether in favor of the Bill. But since there were such fair promises, he did not know yet how he would vote.

Mr. P. SINCLAIR would not say that the changing of Commissioners with every change of Government, was any benefit to the Colony. But it was an acknowledged fact, that every Government had power to change the Act. The Bill now before the House would prevent the necessity of changing the law with every change of government. He hoped the Executive would act upon the suggestions of the hon. Leader of the Government, and not make political views a qualification for the office. Such a course would have a tendency to fill the benches with men of more competency and ability for the duties devolving upon them. So far each party had carried their political feelings too far. The sweeping changes carried out by the late Government in many places, were the sole cause of this amendment. He sincerely hoped that the present administration would take a lesson from the past, and not allow such a clean overthrow to be made on purely political principles.

Mr. CAMERON felt disposed to make a few remarks in reference to allusions made by hon. members of the Opposition to the "infusion of new blood" in the present party, thereby suggesting that it behoved this Government more than any other to be the first in adopting a course by which political bias might be overlooked in the matter in question. But he believed it to be the duty of any Government, as well as the present one notwithstanding its "independent" or "composite" character, to do so; and as past Governments had been accustomed to change their officials in the different departments throughout the country, in order to patronize their own supporters, he did not see how hon. members could now consistently dictate to others a course so different to their own usages. Why should not the one be entitled to these privileges as well as the other, whether independent or otherwise. He believed that men of integrity and ability, rather than mere political partisans should be appointed, and he would support any just and satisfactory scheme to carry out this desirable object. While Courts of Law were under the supervision of the Government, they