

introduce here were dropped, and why? Not because of any change of opinion on the part of the Government on the question, nor because the House of Lords was opposed to the principle, but because it was found on examination that they were liable to practical objections, to obviate which amendments would have to be introduced which there were no means of arranging without further communications with the colonies. The Imperial Government would not make these changes in the measure without the consent of the colonies, but Earl GREY by no means changed his mind in regard to the advantages to be derived from the plan proposed, as the following extract from one of his despatches, written in 1850, to the Governor of New South Wales, will show:—

I am not, however, the less persuaded that the want of some such central authority to regulate matters of common importance to the Australian colonies will be felt, and probably at a very early period; but when this want is so felt, it will of itself suggest the means by which it may be met. The several legislatures will, it is true, be unable at once to give the necessary authority to a General Assembly, because the legislative power of each is confined of necessity within its territorial limits; but if two or more of these legislatures should find that there are objects of common interest for which it is expedient to create such an authority, they will have it in their power, if they can settle the terms of an arrangement for the purpose, to pass acts for giving effect to it, with clauses suspending their operation until Parliament shall have supplied the authority that is wanting. By such acts the extent and objects of the powers which they are prepared to delegate to such a body might be defined and limited with precision, and there can be little doubt that Parliament, when applied to in order to give effect to an arrangement so agreed upon, would readily consent to do so.

Some may say, Mr. SPEAKER, that this is very true, but that the British Government dropped the plan and did not proceed with it. I think I shall be prepared to meet that argument, and show that it only rested in the plan to learn the wishes of the people of the colonies; for you find it following the very same principle, reported upon favorably by the Committee on Trade and Foreign Plantations, in the Constitution which was subsequently granted to the New Zealand provinces. In 1852, the plan suggested by that committee, in regard to Australia, was carried into effect in New Zealand, and it must be remembered that at that time the population of New Zealand was very small, so small indeed that one cannot help contrasting the position of that

country with that of British North America at the present day; but the statesmen of Great Britain looked into the future of the colony, and they decided that it would be advisable to confer on it powers analogous to those now sought for by us. The New Zealand Constitutional Act created six provinces, with superintendents, provincial councils of nine appointed by the governor, and a general government of three estates. In the debate on that bill, Earl GREY said that this was the only form of government which could be conferred on a colony situated as that one was. He remarked:—

It was impracticable and must for many years continue to be so, for any general legislature to meet all the wants of so many separate settlements at a great distance from each other; hence it seemed absolutely necessary to constitute provincial legislatures on which a great portion of the public business must devolve.

The very difficulty which was met with there is the one we have to overcome here. It was found absolutely necessary to create in every province a Local Legislature, and in addition one central power, to whom matters common to all might be referred. Earl GREY, in the course of the same debate, speaking of the importance of this arrangement, said:—“There were some subjects on which extensive inconvenience would arise, if uniformity of legislation among the several provinces were not insured, which could only be accomplished by a General Legislature.” And that, sir, is what this Government now asks us to adopt. They ask us to invite the Imperial Parliament to create for us provincial legislatures, to whom shall be referred all local matters, and that we shall have a General Legislature for the care of those subjects of a general character which could not be so well looked after by the provincial legislatures. And I say, sir, that finding as we do that this is no new question, we can, therefore, understand why this measure met with such ready approval from the statesmen of Britain and the high commendation of Her Majesty by her advisers. (Hear, hear.) But, Mr. SPEAKER, I will now pass from the consideration of the history of this important movement—and I assure you that I feel the difficulty of addressing the House on this subject, in consequence of the sense I entertain of the gravity of the question itself and the momentous character of the issues it involves. The subject, sir, is one of the very highest importance. The destinies of this great country are bound up in it. (Hear, hear.) The