

be the same. He had, however, thought the whole subject over, and had been unable to see what other measure was practicable. No county should be left with a single representative; no single person should have such a responsibility thrown upon him. It was true that the county of Pictou was somewhat favoured for its population was only 8000 more than Cape Breton whilst the population of the latter was more than double that of Queens, or Victoria, or Shelburne, or Richmond. He was amused, he added, at the hon. member for Shelburne having in previous years moved to abolish the Legislative Council. Did the people then authorize the hon. member to move in the matter? Yet the same hon. gentleman who would have laid violent hands upon the Council when the people did not authorize him, now objected to the Legislature reducing its numbers on the ground that the people had not consented or expressed their opinion on the subject.

Mr. ARCHIBALD said that he would not believe that his hon. friend from Shelburne would contend that it was not competent for the Parliament to deal with any question touching the franchise of the electors who returned them. It was not long since they had passed an act to add to the number of the representatives of the county of Cape Breton. If they were allowed to add one, they could add two or three or four, or as many as they thought proper to the legislature. If they had the power to add, they had also the right to reduce. He did not pretend to say that the bill was perfect, but he must acknowledge that it would be difficult to devise a measure which, upon the whole, suited the circumstances of the country better.

It was quite certain that the first thing the Legislature had to do was to reduce the expense of its local constitution in proportion to the smaller amount of duties that would remain under Confederation. A very large proportion of the work now transacted by the Legislature would be taken away from it after this. The work that would remain could be easily transacted by a much smaller body. Nothing could be more reasonable than to take away from the Local Legislature about the same number of men who would be sent as representatives to Ottawa. He thought it wise to leave the lines of the counties as they are. The people of each county had certain interests and sympathies in common, and it would be inadvisable to disturb them. He believed it would be impossible to leave any county with only one representative. No other county except Pictou exceeded 20,000 in population to any extent. No doubt the same cause that had contributed to give such a superiority to Pictou would continue. It was, therefore, only fair that it should receive larger representation than other counties in the Province. It would be quite allowable for any Legislature hereafter to increase the number of the members if it should think proper; but it must be quite obvious that if the number were left as it is now, nobody elected hereafter would be likely to reduce it.

Hon. FIN. Sec. said that if any one would take the census of the several counties and divide the Province into two sections, east and west, it would be seen that the present measure was remarkably fair. The eastern division,

with a population of about 140,000, would have one-half the representation, whilst the western division with 132,000, would have the other half. Under these circumstances it must be acknowledged that the bill was very fair to all sections. It would be impossible to distribute the representation more equitably, except it would be determined to alter and rearrange the existing boundaries of counties. It would be very unwise, however, to disturb the present social and municipal arrangements that exist in the different counties. The superiority of Pictou in respect to population over all other counties naturally entitled it to an additional representative. It was certainly a curious spectacle to see the hon. members for Yarmouth and Shelburne, who pretended to be so desirous of retrenchment, now attempting to make our local system of government as expensive as possible.

If it was as stated by the hon. member for Shelburne, that the Local Legislature would have little to do, why advocate leaving the number of representatives as it was now? A large portion of the duties now performed by the Legislature would devolve upon the General Government, but still the Local Government would have many important matters in its care. Education, the roads and bridges, the mines and minerals, were all subjects of paramount importance. The amount of revenue for local distribution would be considerably larger than the whole revenue was ten or twelve years ago. Under these circumstances, it was absurd to say that the questions which would come under the consideration of the Local Legislature would be very insignificant. It was quite unnecessary, however, to refute the views of gentlemen opposite; there was no consistency in their arguments; what they asserted at one moment was contradicted by the statement they made in the very next breath.

Mr. COFFIN said that the Government, after having failed so long to carry out its retrenchment policy, would be able at last to lay claim to having redeemed its pledge. The manner in which it did so—the circumstances that influenced its action, would hardly be acceptable to the people.

Dr. BROWN was opposed to the measure before the House, because it made the representation more unequal than before. This House had for many years past been striving to equalize the representation according to the population of the different countries. This bill was a step backwards. Take, for instance, the County of Kings, which had more than double the population of Victoria and Queens, and a much larger proportion of wealth, the assessed value of property of Kings being in 1861, according to the census, over three times as great as that of Queens and Victoria together—their representation is to remain untouched, while that of Kings is to be reduced one-half, to two members instead of four. Nothing could be more unequal—nothing could be more unjust, than the operation of this bill.