

cation between the people and the Lieutenant Governor, no doubt they would have received an answer; but they pursued a different course—the petitions were sent by a deputation, and handed in through a spokesman to His Excellency." These gentlemen, it appears, considered that it was a sufficient reason to treat the petition of 26,000 electors of this Province with profound contempt because they did not come through the Provincial Secretary. Suppose, now, we say to these same gentlemen that if they had sent in their petitions through the proper channel there would have been a dissolution long ago. (Laughter.) But they have never condescended to bring these documents under our notice, and I think I know the reason why, they did not send them through the Provincial Secretary's Office.

I was surprised at the contempt with which the hon. member asserted that this measure was actually being passed in Parliament without these petitions having ever been read. All I can say is that I sat in the House of Commons the night before I left England, and, up to that time, these petitions had never even been seen. I think when I put this and that together I may be able to venture a pretty good calculation why they had not been seen, and why they had not come through the Provincial Secretary's office. We know that all that men could do was done, by appeals in the press and by public lectures and a paid organization, to excite and stir up disapproval that never existed and does not exist now. Yet despite all the exertions that were made for many months, they could not get 10,000 petitioners to put their names on this table. When I know this fact—that after years of excitement and misrepresentation they were unable to get anything but a response of so feeble a character—I can understand why these 30,000 petitioners were not subjected to the scrutinizing eye of the Provincial Secretary or of any other person who would be able to verify whether there was any substance in these petitions or not. The reason why the Parliament of England had not seen these petitions down to the hour of the second reading of the bill in Commons, was probably that they were of a character that would have excluded them from being presented. I give this to the hon. gentleman opposite as the excuse why these petitions have not been presented, although that apology is not demanded at my hands.

But I must continue my quotations from the constitutional maxims of the late Government Mr. Howe said: "But, sir, if they received no reply in words, they were completely answered otherwise. The constituents of Digby unconstitutionally asked for a dissolution; we answered the prayer of the petition by constructing a valuable wharf in that locality." (Laughter.) Well, I think we have also constructed a few wharves and bridges in that community and elsewhere. (Renewed Laughter.) Again Mr. Howe continued: "As fast as possible I am running a road through Inverness, that the life-blood of that county may flow on through a healthy channel." (Great laughter.) "Queen's has received a grant for deepening Liverpool harbour. To the counties through which the railway passes my answer is the balance in the treasury to the credit of the railway, at the close of the present year. To all the counties I reply,

the general increase in your revenue—the general provincial prosperity—the peace and order that have reigned everywhere,—these are the bases of my reply to this charge." Well, I think we can claim public support on much stronger grounds than those adduced by the hon. gentleman. "But I tell the hon. gentleman that even in a legal point of view he is wrong. I defy him to put his finger on an instance where Parliament has been dissolved at the instigation of petitions. A dissolution involves the exercise of the extreme power of the Crown, and should rarely, if ever, be resorted to, except under necessity most urgent and overpowering. \* \* \* Let me now refer to the opinion of a very eminent divine, who has marked the operation of universal suffrage, and hear what this gentleman says on that subject. After describing the gigantic evils of the system, he says: 'What then is to be done? Universal suffrage is the law of our land. Every one knows that this law cannot be repealed, for I repeat it the masses must vote its repeal; and this, of course, they will not do. There are many indications that of late years, through the vast flood of immigration, through the infamous conduct of designing demagogues, through the increase of intemperance, these degraded masses are gaining in number and in power.' We have the power, if we possess the will, to repeal this law—to strike down once and forever the evil—to relieve ourselves from the charge of being the only British colony, save Australia, governed by universal suffrage—to purge our constitution, and purify our electoral system. Let no man at this crisis hesitate or falter, but manfully and honestly perform his duty, to himself and to his country."

This is the doctrine that suited gentlemen in 1863,—they endorsed it to the fullest extent they possibly could. In 1863 to make a radical change in the constitution was right and proper—to ignore the voice of the 26,000 petitioners was right and proper—to force a law upon the statute book, to prevent a large body of the people passing upon their acts, was fully sustained by these gentlemen. I am glad that I cannot include the hon. member for Yarmouth in these observations, for he was then on this side of the House.

I was a good deal astonished when I heard the hon. member state that the delegates had exceeded the powers which they had received from the house in dealing with this question. I must confess I have had occasion sometimes to find fault with gentlemen opposite for their very short memories, but I was hardly prepared for a statement like that. Is there a man in this house with the exception of the mover of this amendment who does not know that this question was debated in this parliament plainly upon the basis that under that resolution the delegates were to be empowered to go to the Imperial authorities and obtain the passage of an Act without future reference to this Legislature? Is there a single man on either side who will endorse the statement made by the mover, that the delegates exceeded their authority in the slightest degree, or that the whole question was