

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

FRIDAY, January 27.

Observations of the Hon. R. J. PINSENT in moving

the Address in reply to his Excellency's Speech:

Hon. R. J. PINSENT rose to make a motion,—the usual one on an occasion of this kind—that committee be appointed to prepare a reply to the very gracious speech with which the present session of the legislature has been inaugurated. He should not at this time occupy at very considerable length the attention of the Council in discussing elaborately the many subjects of public concern which his Excellency the Governor had alluded to; nor devote himself to an analysis of the general affairs of the colony. These matters would come within the range of their deliberations at future and more fitting periods for discussion. At present he should confine his remarks to a summary review of the leading features of the Speech, preparatory to the motion he was about to make. He (Mr. P.) regarded the present as no common period in the history of the colony, viewing its depressed trade and the destitute condition of the people, —the sad result of successive misfortunes and difficulties,—a state of affairs which evoked the anxiety of all interested in the country's welfare. In this crisis Her Majesty had been pleased to appoint a new Governor to preside over our political destinies, in place of the venerable gentleman of whose very late decease we had just heard, after the attainment of a mature old age, and having spent many years of his life in honourable public service. In the gentleman who had been appointed to succeed him, so far as we could judge from our necessarily short and imperfect experience, Her Majesty's Government had made a very happy and fortunate selection, and we have every reason to believe that the administration of the affairs of the colony under his guidance will prove of that vigorous and judicious character which the circumstances of the country now demand. We recognize in him a ruler in the prime and vigor of physical and intellectual manhood, whose ability and education, general and official, were evidently of a high order, and who he (Mr. P.) believed possessed in connection with them those qualities of head and heart which adorn the high position he occupies, and fit him to fulfil its duties with honour to himself and with advantage to the interests of the people whom he has been appointed to govern. He thought that in giving this expression to his own sentiments he was also expressing the feelings of his brother members and of the community in general. The language of his Excellency, in addressing the legislature to-day, still further strengthened the opinion of his Excellency that the Volunteer organization was subject which appeared to have enlisted the particular interest of his Excellency since his assumption of the government, and he suggests measures for its continuance and extension. He (Mr. P.) entertained the opinion that in a country like this, the avocation of the people were of that peculiar character that the formation of a militia service could not prove practicable, therefore the best method of obtaining a local force was by means of Volunteer companies;—they should be encouraged and extended, as his Excellency suggests. The compilation and consolidation of the laws was a subject which had frequently occurred to his (Mr. P.'s) mind, as he felt sure it had to many others, for years past, as a matter of great necessity. Any expense that would attend its effectuation would be amply repaid by the convenience and enlightenment so necessary a measure will afford, and he heartily coincided in this valuable suggestion in the Speech. With respect to the proposed Union of the British North American Colonies, he (Mr. P.) should reserve for the present any expression of opinion. In its official capacity this is the first time the question has been brought under the consideration of the Council. We therefore know nothing of it beyond the allusion contained in the Speech from the Throne, and he should reserve its discussion until a more fitting season;—after the reports and documents concerning it promised by his Excellency shall have been laid before the house. He (Mr. P.) was gratified to learn that the report of the efficient Geologist, Mr. Murray, who was employed last summer in surveying the mineral lands of the country, has proved a highly satisfactory one. This was a subject which he (Mr. P.) always felt a lively interest in, and had brought under the notice of the legislature nearly every Session since he had the honor of a seat in it. He always believed that our mineral deposits would one day prove a source of infinite wealth to the colony, and the terms in which his Excellency speaks of that Report foreshadow prospective and very valuable addition to our other branches of industry. We have already strong evidence of what may be anticipated, in the fact of the employment of foreign capital in the working of our mines, which he regarded as proof positive of the existence of substantial grounds of hope. There was one subject referred to in the Speech which he (Mr. P.) regretted was not dealt with more explicitly,—that of coastal steam. This was a question of importance second to none, not even to roads, as regards the interests of the people; and he was sorry to see that difficulties had stood in the way of its being carried out so fully and efficiently, as was universally desired. We are assured the government did its utmost to provide an more efficient establishment in accordance with the wishes and authority of the Legislature, but failed in their endeavours. He had no doubt that the statement of his Excellency on this head was correct, and of course the legislature would be furnished with a fuller explanation of the reason which prevented its accomplishment. He did not agree with those who opposed local Steam on the ground that there was not traffic sufficient to make the service remunerative or even self-supporting. He looked upon such an argument as false in principle and opposed to experience. Let the undertaking be established on an efficient basis, and it will in due time create a trade and business. We should not wait for traffic, but establish means for its encouragement. It had, however, another aspect,—the improving influence it would exercise upon the remote and isolated inhabitants of the out-posts. This consideration should weigh equally with the pecuniary one, in a subject of this nature, and he sincerely trusted that at no remote day local Steam would be placed upon more extended footing. In conclusion he could not but join in the aspiration of his Excellency, that "the Almighty Ruler of events may bless our labour and direct them for the good of the people whose interests are in our keeping, and crown our deliberations with results promoting the good order, the peace, and the prosperity of the community to which we belong." It was to us indeed a momentous period,—dark and gloomy one. Let us remember, however, that "the darkest hour precedes the brightest morn," and reflecting upon the difficulties we are now passing through, we may indulge a hope that they are the precursor of the dawn of happier and brighter days. He begged to move the appointment of a committee to prepare an Address in reply to his Excellency's Speech.

MONDAY, January 30.

rived at, when hon. gentlemen had formed their opinions, he trusted that each would fearlessly act on these opinions, guided by his conscience to do what he conceived to be the most advantageous for the public good, present and future. His Excellency referred to the Geological Survey, in which some progress had been made, which was due to the efforts of the present administration; and by its results it had given us hopes that our mineral wealth was extensive. There are at present two copper mines in operation, which were affording employment and assistance to many, who, from the failure of the fisheries, and but for such timely aid, would be in great distress. The enterprising capitalists who were working these mines should be encouraged. Everything should be done by this House to assist parties who had thus invested their capital, as these gentlemen had done. He (Mr. Whitemay) referred to this matter, because he believed these parties had not received that consideration from the government to which they were entitled. He said this with regard to the postal communication. They had been compelled to employ special messengers to carry their mails, to maintain their communication with England, and this ought not to be. If a small amount were given for that purpose it would be well expended. He (Mr. W.) thought that all must coincide in the hope expressed by his Excellency relative to the laying of the Atlantic Telegraph Cable. He (Mr. Whitemay) never could refer to this subject without thinking of one who was its pioneer in this country. He referred to Mr. F. N. Gishorne, who after connecting all the British North American Provinces, first conceived the idea of uniting this colony with the mother country by means of the Atlantic Telegraph Cable. Nothing gave that gentleman greater pleasure now than looking forward to its successful completion next summer. He (Mr. Whitemay) would not detain the House any longer at present, as each matter referred to by his Excellency would individually form a subject for discussion hereafter. He begged to second the motion for the appointment of a Select Committee.

Mr. PARSONS.—No person who had heard that speech but must agree that it was a masterly effort. It was the maiden speech of an able statesman who pantered to no party. There were suggestions in which he (Mr. Parsons) did not concur; but taken as a whole, it was the most practical opening speech to which the House had listened for a long time. It touched on many important subjects; and shadowed forth some things, which, if carried into effect, would be productive of incalculable benefit to the people of the country. His Excellency, during the short time he had been amongst us, appeared to have directed his attention to the wants of the country with an earnest desire to promote the best interests of the people over whom he had been appointed to rule. There were, however, suggestions in which he (Mr. Parsons) could not concur. His Excellency recommended that every district should be made to support its own poor. That appeared to be very reasonable; but when, from the failures of the fisheries, the people of many districts of the island were reduced to desolation, there were few or none in those districts who were in a condition to contribute any thing for the support of their neighbours. He (Mr. Parsons) thought if his Excellency had gone farther with the subject of agriculture he would have pointed out the only means of raising the people above want. It was well known that the fisheries of the country were inadequate to sustain its increasing population, and that it was their partial failure, for several years past, which had brought the people to their present state. No people were harder or more energetic than the fishermen of this colony; but still, from unsuccessful fisheries, many of them were reduced to a state of absolute want. He (Mr. Parsons) had long urged upon successful governments the necessity of giving proper encouragement to agriculture, as the only means of giving the people something to rely on. He would remind them that the immense sum of £30,000 had been annually voted by the House, and expended by the government in relieving the poor. Would it not have been more beneficial if that sum, or a large portion of it, had been employed in the encouragement of agriculture, which would have placed many of its recipients above the degradation of poor relief? What permanent good arose from that expenditure? Did the government act in that paternal manner to be expected from them, in expending such a large sum? When public improvements were spoken of, we were told that the government had no money; and still we had this enormous pauper expenditure going on; and the only return we had was the making of a few bye-roads and the repair of a few unimportant bridges. Could any person persuade the people that the money was properly expended? If that money was expended in the promotion of agriculture, or in stimulating the fisheries, we would not have a different result? Would the people be degraded, as now, by being compelled to come to the Chairman of the Board of Works and the Colonial Secretary to ask for pauper relief? When was it, until a few years ago, that the fishermen of the country came bowing to an official, sustained on the produce of the fishermen's labour, begging for a crumb of bread? When was it that a fisherman had to come to a mushroom official to beg a pittance of that which his own labour had produced? Few knew the reduced condition of the people of the country, whose toil had enriched the land. Let the money of the Treasury be thrown broadcast to those who wanted it, for it was by their toil that it came into the Treasury. The speech referred to the mackerel fishery; but how were the fishermen to prosecute these fisheries without encouragement from the government? Give them the means out of that money which was their own. But it was best if they were enabled to cultivate the lands; but from unsuccessful fisheries they were so reduced that the land remained uncultivated. If the Government enabled them to cultivate it, they would be relieved from the necessity of giving poor relief. The government had some years ago offered land free, with assistance in cultivation, and in building a dwelling-house, to any person who should settle upon it; and he (Mr. Parsons) had applied to the Surveyor-General to be informed how many had availed of the offer, when it was stated that only one or two had done so. But he had been told that thirty or forty had applied; but that they were sent from one official to another, and nothing actually done for them, that they had given up the hope of getting anything. The offer was a perfect delusion. The hon. member opposite shadowed forth a measure which seemed to interest him much, the proposed federation of the colonies, which was to produce such beneficial results. He (Mr. Parsons) hoped it would be made a government measure. He could not hear from hon. gentlemen favorable to it what these results were to be. They were content to live on generalities. It was a very great thing in prospective; but, at all events, hon. members were not in a position to deal with this session. He wished to know who authorised these gentlemen to proceed to Quebec and sign the resolutions of the Conference on behalf of the people of this colony, without the authority of the people. The hon. Premier forbore to take the constitutional course last session to obtain authority for sending delegates to the Charlottetown Convention, to confer about a Legislative union of the Maritime Provinces. But it never entered into the minds of the people to unite with Canada, a province so deeply sunk in debt, a union

where you will throughout the country,—wherever a road is opened, there you find the cottier settling himself upon the soil; and though in the beginning his labours seem of little account, they in due time become extended and bring comfort and support to the family of the poor man, adding to the improvement of the colony. In this connection the subject of sheep rearing deserves attention. It was a matter that was likely to become a source of great benefit to the people in course of time, should it receive that liberal encouragement that it deserves. His Excellency also recommends the cultivation of flax, in which he (Mr. P.) fully concurred. The practical suggestion respecting the improvement of the means of education, and particularly for the formation of Normal schools to train teachers for the education of the people, was one that merited serious attention; and we can't fail to approve of his Excellency's desire to promote it, as he trusted they should aid in doing. Unfortunately it happened that in Newfoundland the low standard of education amongst the masses of the people was owing, not so much to a deficiency of Schools, as to a careless and culpable negligence on the part of the people themselves to use the educational privileges placed within their reach. We have Schools in many parts of the Island. Besides the institutions supported by Government, wonders had been done in the establishment of Schools by worthy Prelates and Ministers of religion, and very valuable aid was rendered by the Colonial Church and School Society in England, which has expended annually, for many years, nearly £2,000 a year towards educating the youth of the colony, erecting Schools, and providing efficient teachers. By these means the opportunities of education were brought to the door of thousands who did not avail them. He (Mr. P.) should leave the discussion of his Excellency's recommendations upon the subject of the Salmon fishery to those legislators who were more conversant with the fisheries and better qualified to give a practical opinion upon that he was. The Volunteer organization was a subject which appeared to have enlisted the particular interest of his Excellency since his assumption of the government, and he suggests measures for its continuance and extension. He (Mr. P.) entertained the opinion that in a country like this, the avocation of the people were of that peculiar character that the formation of a militia service could not prove practicable, therefore the best method of obtaining a local force was by means of Volunteer companies;—they should be encouraged and extended, as his Excellency suggests. The feelings of his brother members and of the community in general. 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