

vantages that are afforded by an academy for instruction in the higher branches of learning. When it is recollected, as you will see by reference to the report of the Superintendent of Education, that the common school education of the country was in such a deplorable condition, that the persons who were qualified to fill the position of teachers had abandoned their profession for more lucrative pursuits, you can easily understand that if the law which is now on the statute book had been as perfect as it could be—if there had been the utmost disposition on the part of the people to adopt it—it would, nevertheless, have been impracticable to carry it out to a much larger extent than has already been the case. For out of all the teachers in the Province, only 600 were found in a position to obtain a license to teach school under the law—proving that the condition of common school education was such as to give no encouragement to men of the qualifications necessary for teachers. In order to meet the difficulty of not having persons who would be able, under the operation of the law, to fill the position of common school teachers, and to provide for the requirements of the country whilst in a state of transition from the old to the new law, the examiners were instructed throughout the Province, to give permissive licenses for one year to persons whose qualifications would not bring them under the provisions of the Act. The Government do not intend to propose any fundamental change in the mode of carrying on the common school education of the country. The only step which they propose to take is one which, I am proud to say, will be in advance. If the government of the day were disposed to recede from the position which they felt called upon to take a year ago, when they brought forward a measure for the education of the people; if they were so recreant to their duty, as to abandon the stand which they assumed and recede from the great principle, that in Nova Scotia free schools shall exist, and the means of education be opened up to all classes of the people, I believe the independent spirit of the Legislature would rise up on both sides and would say, that the course of the government was not only unworthy of themselves, but, with the evidence that is now before the country of the success of the measure, would be, in the last degree, prejudicial and disastrous to the people of the province.

**The Petitions against the Law.**—I have listened with much anxious attention to the voice of the country, as expressed in the truly constitutional manner by petition to the Legislature. I have no hesitation in saying that when the government brought forward this measure, they did so with the full knowledge and under the clear conviction that they were taking a step which would naturally arouse a great hostility throughout the country. They felt they were taking a step which endangered the popularity of the government and which would naturally tend to arouse, to a large extent in all probability, the action of the people in reference to the law. They brought forward the measure, however, through the conscientious conviction that the government of this country would no longer refuse to take a step which had been so long declared necessary for the public welfare. I confess I was prepared to find this table flooded with petitions from every county in the Province, especially in connection with the great difficulties that have been found in the transition from the old law to the new—in fact, I was prepared to find an amount of hostility exhibited on the part of the people of this country which I am happy to say, has not been the case. No people are better acquainted with the right which they have to approach this House by petition or with the influence which their wishes have over the minds of their representatives. And yet in reference to a measure which has not yet had an opportunity of being fully understood—a measure fraught with very great difficulties in its introduction, I am proud to find that the voice of the people in opposition to it has been very small. From the county of Antigonish there has come a number of petitions, signed by 635 persons in all, against the School Bill. I am happy to know that this county stands almost alone in the amount of hostility exhibited to this measure—Kings only bearing it company. The county of Queens sends several petitions, with 383 signatures. I am pleased to know, whilst a great deal of difficulty has been experienced in Yarmouth in putting the act into operation yet it has exhibited the most patriotic and enlightened spirit in connection with this measure. Only 36 persons in that county have asked for its repeal. The county of Colchester, it is gratifying to find, only sends 63. The results in that county have been eminently satisfactory—the law having there been brought more extensively into operation than in any other county.

The county of Kings has sent in a number of petitions, and I regret to be obliged to say that some of them are not couched in the most courteous language in reference to this measure. However, there are only 470 persons who petition from that county for the repeal of the enactment, leaving an overwhelming majority of the intelligent electors, as far as petitions go, in favour of its provisions. From Inverness there are two petitions, one of 37, and the other of 38, or 75 persons in all. From Antigonish there is but one petition signed by 133. In Cumberland, I am happy to find, 77 petitioners have only approached the House. Although great difficulties have been experienced in that county, I am happy to know that the most intelligent persons of both parties have united in the most patriotic manner to advance what they consider a great step in advance. Digby only sends 79 petitioners. And the total in the whole province is only 2193 petitioners, which is small indeed, when you reflect that the number of electors must be between 50 and 60,000 at least. You must remember too, that these petitions came

up at a time when the bill has not had an opportunity of demonstrating the value it possesses—when the public mind has been excited to a greater degree than it will be excited again—that it is founded on a principle most obnoxious to the people. And yet under all these circumstances, after the House has been in session some weeks, and full opportunity given to the people to express their opinion to as full an extent as they could wish, we find the result as I have stated it to you.

**The Council of Public Instruction.**—The House is aware that one of the provisions of the bill which has been the subject of discussion is that which constitutes the Executive Council of the Council of Public Instruction. Gentlemen opposite opposed that clause of the bill, although they did not attach any very great importance to it, but even if they had, it was a point on which the government entertained so strong an opinion that it would have been exceedingly difficult for them to yield. Now we have had the law in operation for some six months, and I have yet to learn that a single substantial argument can be raised before the House and country, proving that the objections to a Council of Public Instruction, as constituted under the bill, are well founded. As a member of the Executive Council I have the greatest reluctance to occupy such a position. It is one that whilst it is impossible that a government can make it subservient in the slightest degree to its own popularity, necessarily brings down a great deal of odium in connection with the operation of the law. The government introduced that clause in the act, believing that it would be impossible to find any Council that would be as well adapted efficiently to work the bill; and I have no hesitation in saying that the experience we have had during the past six months confirms us in the position we have taken in reference to this matter. It is well known that if there is one subject in respect to which the government of England feel bound to assume a share of responsibility, it is in connection with Education; and it was only at the last session of the House of Commons that the minister of Public Instruction was challenged in his place, and held responsible to the Parliament, in reference to a great question touching the Education of the people, and obliged to vacate his position. So watchful are the people in that enlightened country and so determined are they that the government shall not be in a position to hold power and yet evade responsibility in relation to this delicate question by throwing the odium upon any board or section of persons that are not responsible to the people.

There is not a member of the present Government that would not be delighted if it were in accordance with what he considers his duty to the people, to avoid the responsibility he takes upon himself in the Council of Public Instruction. If I were to go from the treasury to the opposition benches, I would wish to have the security for myself and children that I would feel when the high functions of the Council of Public Instruction were discharged by a body of gentlemen who were directly responsible to the Parliament and country in connection with duties of so onerous and delicate a character. In New Brunswick the Council of Public Instruction is the Executive Council also, with the addition of the Lieutenant Governor and the Superintendent of Education. It was suggested last session that we should add these two gentlemen to the Council here, but we declined, and I have no hesitation in saying we did so for reasons which were substantial and valid. In the first place, I hold, notwithstanding the example of New Brunswick, that it is unconstitutional for the Lieutenant Governor to occupy the position of chairman, inasmuch as he becomes personally implicated in the management of matters which, I consider, are not only of the most delicate and onerous character, but for which the people of the country have a right to hold somebody directly responsible. Suppose a question which has created a great deal of sectional difficulty, touching Education, was brought up in this Council of Public Instruction; what takes place? The Council have to deal with it in the only way that is practicable, where there are a number of minds holding various opinions, that is, be guided by the majority. The Lieutenant Governor sits in the chair, a controversy arises of an exciting character, a tie occurs and a vote is taken—what then? The vote of the Lieutenant Governor decides the question; but herein lies the difficulty. It is in the power of any member of this House to rise and ask for the minutes of that Council, and on their production to show what the action of the Council had been, and the constitutional dilemma would be exhibited of the Lieutenant Governor, standing high above all parties and discharging functions similar to those which Her Majesty discharges, in relation to the British Parliament, held responsible for that act.

It may be said that such is an extreme case, but nevertheless, it is one perfectly natural, and involving a constitutional difficulty such as would warrant any Lieutenant Governor refusing his sanction to a bill which placed him in such an equivocal position. It would be also a most unwise and inconvenient step to make the Superintendent of Education a member of this Council. He, like every other public officer in the country, is responsible to the people for his acts, but not directly so; and the mode in which you reach such an officer is as you reach a commissioner of mines, through the government. There is no power in this House to change a public officer except by changing the government; and therefore anything that would place a subordinate officer in the position to overrule (as he would be able to do) what would be otherwise a majority of the government, would be inconsistent with our practice, and extremely unwise in its effects. The Superintendent of Education should be in a position to give the best aid in his

power and to carry out the requests of the government, in such a way as should devolve the responsibility not directly upon himself, but upon them. I have no hesitation in saying that the experience of the past year has confirmed me much more strongly in the opinion I held, that the best body which could be obtained in the Province of Nova Scotia to deal with the great question of education is the Executive Council, and the bill which is now submitted to the House will embrace that provision.

**The School Inspectors.**—It has been contended that the number of inspectors was too large—that the duties could be performed more efficiently by a smaller number, who could be selected with a regard to their high qualifications, and could give their whole attention to the important matters entrusted to them. There will be hardly a member to be found who will deny that if there is to be anything like an efficient system of education, its very life and soul must be found in an able and vigorous inspection of the schools of the country. I will not, therefore, discuss the question as to the necessity that exists for the appointment of inspectors; but I may state that the government are bound to accept the suggestions of hon. gentlemen, whatever their political opinions are, especially where experience has proved that they are based on sound premises. Having had some months' experience of the bill, I think in this particular it may be modified to some extent, though I believe that it would have been very difficult to have organized our school system, unless there had been a school inspector in every county. This bill will provide that instead of an inspector for each county, there will be seven for the Province, or one to 200 sections. This provision will enable us to retain men of qualifications requisite for the onerous position of school inspectors, since they will receive such an amount of salary as will remunerate them sufficiently for giving their whole time and attention to their duties.

**Free Schools.** The increase of Grant.—The House may decide differently what the Council of Public Instruction or what the number of inspectors should be—it might sweep away the system of county academies; and yet the fundamental principle of this measure would not be touched. All these matters of detail, in reference to which every gentleman is invited to express his opinions fully; but the fundamental principle of the bill is what is contained in the act of last session—that is, the great principle of FREE SCHOOLS. That is the fundamental principle, and in order to carry it out, I know of no other means by which it can be accomplished than assessment—the principle of recognizing the duty and obligation which the property of the country owes to the education of the people; and this principle will be found not only to be contained in this bill, but advanced to a more stable foundation than in the measure which received the sanction of the Legislature a year ago. A great deal of difficulty has arisen from the fact that the people in the various sections were invited to come together and say whether they would organize a school or not. Conflict was as it were, invited between those who favoured and those who opposed assessment.

Therefore while it is desirable to retain in the hands of the people as much power as possible in reference to taxation, I feel that the sentiments of some gentlemen opposite in respect to this measure a year ago, have been proved to possess a great deal that was sound and worthy of the attention of the House. The hope was that the premium that was held out to the principle of assessment would be such as to induce the people to come forward and adopt the principle. Under the operation of the law, there are a great many instances in which this conflict of opinion has resulted, and that a bare majority in a school section have refused to organize, and have left a large influential minority sincerely desirous to have a school, without one. We believe it is necessary that whilst going as far as this House can possibly—as far as the government can in accordance with their duty—to meet the objection which is felt to anything like taxation, we should take another step in advance. And whilst providing the means to render this mode of supporting schools as little obnoxious to the public mind as is practicable, we believe that it would be unworthy of ourselves if we refrained from pursuing a course that will secure to a still greater extent the operation of free schools throughout the Province. In order to do that and at the same time meet the feeling of the people on the principle of assessment, the government have decided to go farther in the direct contribution which shall be given from the treasury of the country to the common schools. A great step, as everybody is aware, was taken at the last session, and the amount granted to common schools was enormously increased, but the government think that they may safely, in relation to so important a branch of the public service, go farther and relieve the people, as far as direct taxation is concerned, to a much larger extent than they did in the measure of last year. The amount under the old law was \$45,080 for common schools, and \$65,000 for the grammar schools, or \$51,580 in all. The government proposed last year, and the House sanctioned, a very large advance upon that sum, but we shall ask the Legislature, under this bill, to double actually the amount which under the old law was given from the revenue in support of schools. The fact that the government are the Council of Public Instruction enables them to feel, not in that remote manner that is the case when the business goes through a subordinate department, but directly whenever there is any friction, whenever there is any difficulty encountered in working the law. In this way we are in a position to know what the public sentiment is and what are the difficulties, to an extent that we

could not possibly, if the Council were differently constituted. If there is any one feeling which is especially popular throughout the province in relation to the maintenance of common schools, it is that the government should resort to as large an extent as is possible to indirect taxation for that purpose. Therefore yielding to that feeling and prejudice, the government have decided to draw as largely as they can the means for the support of common schools from the treasury; but having taken that great step in advance, we also propose to ask the Legislature to go still further ahead and impose a direct assessment upon the people of Nova Scotia from one end to the other, to supplement the provincial grant and such a fund as will make provision for a school in every section. It is therefore proposed to levy a county assessment upon every county in Nova Scotia, for two-thirds of the amount which is contributed directly from the treasury of the country. Having increased so enormously from the treasury the means for the education of the people, I do trust that the House will be disposed to assist the government in respect to what is the fundamental principle of the bill, and that intelligent men of all classes and parties, will be ready to contribute a limited amount by assessment for the support of schools all over the face of this country.

I may be asked why the county has been substituted for the section. Under the existing law suppose two sections adopt the principle of assessment in order to have efficient schools. You may see two farms, each worth £500, alongside of each other, though in different sections, and whilst the owner of one may be taxed \$10, the other may be put down at \$20. The fact is, that the amount required for the support of schools in one section is what governs the section and, therefore, these two individuals, although neither of them may have any direct interest in the school, are so unequally taxed. When it was found that such was the operation of the act, this mode to which I have alluded has been arranged as one that will be more equitable—one recognising the principle that the property of the county should provide for the education of the county, and that the amount so levied should be distributed equally and fairly according to the necessities of the county and the condition of the schools that are supported in each section.

**The Modes Operandi.**—The mode in which the money from the treasury will be distributed will be this:—Whilst we propose to have seven inspectors, with salaries, and at the same time pursue a course that will enable us to save the entire amount required for their payment. Instead of sending the grant to the counties and allowing the inspectors to levy 5 per cent. upon it, thereby diminishing its amount considerably, it is proposed to pay the money from the treasury to the school teachers in on the certificates of the Board of Commissioners as to the position that the teacher occupies. As the money is now given according to the class of the teacher, no difficulty will arise in apportioning the amount which each should receive. The county assessment will go into the county treasury, and the party receiving the provincial grant will also obtain an order on the county treasurer for a like sum, and the amount levied on the county will be distributed upon the same principles as are applicable to the provincial grant. In that way a fund will be created that will enable the people in every section to have a school. We also propose, having furnished a large quota from the provincial treasury, and drawn a comparatively small amount by direct taxation from the pockets of the people all over the Province, to supplement the fund thus raised by a still further sum as the people may themselves decide in every school section—either by subscription or assessment. The only thing the legislature will demand is, that the schools of the county in virtue of the grant from the Province, and the sum levied upon the property of the county, shall be free and open to all. Another difficulty has arisen in connection with the fact that the people in a section could exclude the section from a school, by refusing to organize under the law, and appoint trustees. That would not be likely to arise under a bill which levies county assessment, and compels the people irrespective of their own action to contribute to schools; but it is possible that such a contingency may arise, and in order therefore to meet the injustice that might be done to the parties in the section that might be deprived of a school, the bill will provide that were the people shall refuse to organize and elect trustees the difficulty may be supplied by the Board of Commissioners appointing such trustees on the application of any 7 ratepayers who shall be contributors to the school fund.

**The origin of the Bill.**—I do not intend going into the full details of this bill. I will, however, state that the government, a year ago, felt themselves at liberty to ask the late Superintendent of Education for his aid in preparing such a measure as would subserve the great object which they had in view. So now the government have not hesitated to avail themselves of the services of the present Superintendent in the preparation of a measure that would grapple effectually with the difficulties that have arisen in connection with the bill of last year. Therefore a bill has been prepared in connection with that officer that they believe will simplify and render more conspicuous many points which, on experience, have been shown to be attended with some little doubt and difficulty. Under all these circumstances, it has been thought more advisable to substitute another set for the one now on the statute book. I now lay this bill on the table of the House in the confidence that it will receive the same dispassionate consideration, and generous assistance from gentlemen opposite which they gave to the bill submitted last session, and that both sides will