

"Therefore Resolved, That in the opinion of this House, it is highly inexpedient at this time, that a Bishop should be appointed to this Province."

February 16.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

On the Petition from the Right Rev. the Bishop of Charlotte-Town, (Prince Edward Island,) praying that a small annual grant may be made, towards the support of a School for the higher branches of Education, for the people within the settlements in this province, inhabited by the Acadian French.

Mr. SIMONDS said, that that Bishop had the charge of all the settlements of Acadian French within this Province. It was well known that those people had hitherto been much neglected. There was no instance on record, he believed, of any sum having been granted to them for any purpose by the Legislature. They had not been able to benefit by any general grants, on account of their distinct views and habits. They now amounted to about 20,000 souls, and had never received any bounties from the Province. This petition therefore had a very powerful claim on the attention of the Committee. Its object was, to get a small annual grant, in aid of a school which those people proposed establishing in the County of Kent, which was a central situation of them. It was very desirable, as they received no benefit from the grammar or parish school grants, that they should have some aid with respect to education. He (Mr. S.) hoped there would be no objection to the grant prayed for, under these circumstances. They were a very loyal, well-disposed, people, there were none more so in the Province. They were all Roman Catholics, which, he believed, was the reason why they had never derived any benefit from the provincial school grants. In those times, he did not think it necessary to withhold from them what they prayed, as they were equally entitled to such bounties with any other class of the people in the province. They contributed their mite to the public revenue, and had therefore a natural right to a share of it. The hon. member then moved, that the annual sum of £— be granted to the Bishop of Charlotte-Town for the purpose before mentioned.

Mr. END observed that a great part of his constituents were Acadian French, and he was therefore particularly glad this petition had been presented and advocated by a gentleman of such high talents and influence. That circumstance, he thought, was of itself enough to insure its success. But as he (Mr. E.) knew a great deal about these people, he would say a few words on the subject. The sum of £15 had been granted last year on his motion, to Peter Dollar, for teaching a School among the Acadian French. That was the first and only sum ever granted to such an institution. [The hon. member here made some observations with respect to getting school licenses from the Secretary's office. He had been, by mistake, represented on some former occasion to say, that he had been refused such licenses. In fact, he had never found a disposition to refusal, but had uniformly met with the most courteous attention.] The Acadian French certainly did contribute to the revenues of the country, in a very large degree. Not by the consumption of spirituous liquors; for they were among the most temperate men in the country. But their virtues were little known to the community at large. If they had, availed themselves of the provincial bounties, especially the grain bounty, they would have shown the extent of their industry. The house would then have been surprised at their agricultural progress and exertions. But they had till very lately been ignorant of the existence of such bounties; and now that they were aware of them, they did not know how to apply for them. Their settlements were in the greatest state of agricultural perfection; in one parish they had built a stone church capable of containing 2000 people, where the ceremonial of their faith was conducted with great splendour and propriety; and they had made as good roads as any in the Province. He (Mr. E.) thought were people had done so much to help themselves, they were entitled to the consideration of the House. On the part of his constituents he thanked Mr. Simonds sincerely; and hoped the Committee would be liberal in the grant.

Mr. CUNARD felt much pleasure in supporting the petition; not because he had any disposition to mark out the French settlers as better or worse than any other people, but on account of their peculiar circumstances. He heartily concurred in what had been said, and would perhaps be inclined to go for double the sum that would be proposed; in order that those people might have every benefit of education.

Mr. PARTELOW supported the resolution. He hoped there would be but one feeling in the Committee in that respect, with the exception of the word "annual." He thought it better to strike out that word.

Mr. KINNEAR wished to take a right view of this question. He might be wrong in his ideas; and if so, he would be very glad to be set right by the Committee. But his present view of the law was; that in society, in this province, there are two classes of people, desirous to send their children to public schools. For one class the law had provided parish schools; and for those who wished a higher education, there was grammar schools. In every county there was a grammar school; and every parish was entitled to five parish schools. If he was wrong in the position he was about to advance, he begged to be undeceived, but he meant to state his present impressions. He believed there was no religious test or disqualification whatever, respecting these schools. He did not speak of the College; that was a different matter. But on this footing, that the law already provided for all classes, a liberal education in grammar schools, and a common education in parish schools; Protestants and Catholics being all put on the same footing; for he believed there was only one voice as to giving to all the same privileges; he would ask, was it proper for the committee, where provision had been already made for all, to let the Roman Catholic stand out distinct from the rest? There was nothing to prevent them going to any of the schools already provided for; or, if they were unprovided with schools, they could establish them in the same way as others did, under the law. There was nothing said about Catholic or Protestant in the law. He would distinctly state his firm opinion, that the Acadian French were equally entitled, with all other classes, to the benefit of the laws respecting education. He hoped, therefore, he should not be thought desirous to put down this resolution; but he wished to put these people on the same footing as all others, relative to education. There was no necessity, then, for this resolution, under the existing laws. There should be no injudicious distinctions among the people of this country; the schools of the province were

open to all, and there should be no resolution on the journals to show any distinction. As to their peculiar views and habits; that could not be listened to. All the Dissenters might say the same thing; but the law put all on the same footing. The House could not interfere with any religious matters. They should give nothing out of the public funds on that account. He would put it to the good sense of hon. members if this petition was necessary.

Mr. CHANDLER had hoped the grant would pass without a dissenting word. He did not mean to impute the least degree of improper motive to Mr. Kinnear; [Here the hon. member made an "amende honorable" with respect to warm expressions in debate on the "Bishop's" question, the other day.] but he was satisfied if that hon. member knew as much of the Acadian French as the hon. member for Gloucester and himself, he would think very differently on the subject. It was no disparagement to that hon. member to say this. The laws certainly did provide equally for all, with respect to schools. All might send their children to any school in the province; but in consequence of the peculiar habits and manners of the Acadian French, they never would, and, perhaps, never could send theirs to such schools. It would be in vain for legislation to endeavour to assimilate their manners and habits with those of other classes. They always exclusively supported their own poor, and yet they contributed to the support of the poor in general. In Richibucto, lately, several papers had been thrown on the parish, and several illegitimate children. These became a heavy charge on the French in that neighbourhood; but they never availed themselves of their religious habits to escape the burden. If this school among them should go into operation, it would be of the nature of a Grammar School. It would be situated in a very thick settlement, and he (Mr. C.) had no doubt there would soon be 200 children in it. It would be very cheaply conducted, so that poor Frenchmen would be able to send their children there, and they never would or could send them to other schools. It would be one of the most beneficial schools in the province. As to the grant, he thought it had better be from year to year, not a permanent grant. If the school should prove beneficial, there would be no fear of trusting to the liberality of the house for a continuance of support. He regretted that other schools, already established, were not in the same situation. If they had been so, they would have proved more useful. If this resolution should not go into effect, the French would have no schools at all. They would not have common schools, because they could not get masters who understood the language. This school would have the effect of preparing masters, who could establish common schools; which was very desirable. The Acadian French were the original settlers of the country, peaceable, industrious and loyal, and well entitled to consideration.

Mr. S. HUMBERT would never go for exalting the Church of Rome one bar higher than the Church of England, nor for depressing it one bar lower, neither would he exalt or depress any denomination beyond another. Therefore he thought it very improper to make a special grant in this case. It would be travelling out of the rule of the house. The province was as liberal to the Acadian French as to any other class, as the general grants under the law were always open to them. The hon. member contended, that if any denomination of dissenters set themselves up as a distinct people, the House would not make them any special grant for schools; and that therefore the French ought to have no such grant. They might come and take their share of the general provincial allowance. The hon. member disclaimed all prejudice, bigotry and partiality; but insisted that there was no foundation for any claim in this case.

Mr. WELDON supported the resolution, — but not for any such reason as exalting the Catholic religion, or any other. The hon. member contended that the French were entitled to schools, but their habits and principles prevented their having the benefit of the provincial schools. Besides those obstacles, their language was an insurmountable bar in that respect. English teachers were of no use to them. The school was intended for the higher branches of education, in order to provide masters for common schools. There were common French schools in Kent, but almost all the masters had come from Canada. The French Clergy had taken great interest in the education of the people. The priest of Shediac had educated a young man in Canada at his own expense, for the express purpose of promoting education. He (Mr. W.) had had an opportunity of witnessing the exertions of that benevolent individual. These French who were educated in those schools had been better members of society than they otherwise would have been. Unless a special grant were made, the French never would have the fair benefit of education, or a sufficient number of schools. This school was for the purpose of providing teachers for other schools.

Mr. CUNARD made a few further observations in support of the resolution.

Mr. Humbert replied.

Mr. VAIL said a few words, the gist of which we could not hear.

Mr. PARTELOW had not anticipated any opposition to this resolution. He now rose principally to state, that the more he heard on the subject, the more he was confirmed in his opinion, that the grant would be a very proper one, and that the school was wanted.

Mr. CHANDLER stated, for the sake of information, in consequence of the opposition that had been shown, that in one Parish, where the French had been very active in getting up a school, the priest of that parish had given £10 per annum, out of his own pocket towards its support, and that when, after six years' residence there, he left the parish, he did not carry away £20 with him, so charitable had he uniformly been. — After a few other observations, the hon. member contended that the experiment was worth trying in this case, and the first year would prove the operation of the school.

Mr. BROWN said that he had taken notice of the theory of the opposers of this resolution, and it appeared to him perfectly correct. It could not be disputed. But would the practice be equally sound? He presumed it to be well known, that all grammar and parish schools were open to all classes; but under the peculiar circumstances of these people, it appeared that something ought to be done for them. But although all classes had a right to participate in the benefits of the present system, yet it was a

fact, that there was one class who could not come in for their share. What were they to do? If it was seen that the theory of the present system was good, but the practice was imperfect, the house should amend it. It would be useless for him to enter into the causes for supporting the resolution; but he was fully aware that the Acadian French, from their habits, principles, &c. required something to be done for them. As to this being a special grant to Catholics; and that, if made to them, dissenters would have a right to come forward in the same way, he would observe, that they could always participate in the established schools. There was no religious test, no obstacle in their way. The only things, peculiarly religious, taught in those schools, were, he believed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed; things which all Protestants mostly held with and adhered to. All dissenting denominations could and did go to the grammar and parish schools without scruple. But not so with the Catholics. Their peculiarities kept them out of those public schools; more especially, when they used a different language. What could be done with those people? To bring them to those schools, they must change their habits; they must change their religion; and then, last of all, they must change their language too. All this was impossible; which proved the theory of the present system to be good; but the practice imperfect. If, therefore, this resolution should not be adopted; they would be left out altogether.

Mr. KINNEAR said that after all he had now heard, more particularly after what Mr. Brown had advanced, his mind was so far shaken, that he would not oppose the grant for this year. But in withdrawing his opposition now, he left it open for him more fully to consider the matter, that he might be better prepared on the subject before another session of the house. — The hon. member suggested, whether it would not be proper to amend the resolution, and instead of granting the sum to the Bishop of Charlotte-Town who resided out of the province, to entrust it to the Justices of the Peace of the county of Kent. He mentioned this, merely for the purpose of insuring the due application of the grant.

Mr. SIMONDS had no doubt of the proper application of the money, if granted to the Bishop; because the people had already gone to very great expense in preparing a building for the institution, and this sum was intended to relieve them of part of the heavy burden. But if the Committee thought it better to grant it to the Lieutenant Governor, he had no objection.

Mr. ALLEN said that altho' large sums were annually granted to schools, it appeared proper that a moderate sum should be given to these people. He had travelled much among them and he had never met with schools among them, having persons competent to the duties of masters, on account of their not knowing the language. They were obliged to get masters from Canada. This grant would therefore be very proper. The Madawaska settlement might not perhaps participate in the benefit of it, because it was so far distant from the school, but as the eastern parts of the province were densely populated by the Acadian French, it appeared proper that the institution should be situated in that section of the country. Those people have a great desire to be instructed. They had some common schools among them, and many of their scholars had made great proficiency. He thought the circumstance mentioned by Mr. Chandler (respecting the French priest,) should have great influence with the Committee. There had been only one instance of a Frenchman ever asking provincial aid. He thought the grant should be annually made, not permanently, and that it should be thro' the Lieut. Governor, in the same manner as the missionary grant in behalf of the Indians.

Mr. CHANDLER moved an amendment, to the effect that the sum of £— be granted to his Excellency the Lieut. Governor, for the support of a school, (under the direction of the Bishop of Charlotte-Town,) situated in the County of Kent.

Mr. SIMONDS concurred in the amendment, and observed, that altho' the wants of the people were large, yet he would not move for a large sum, as they did so much always for themselves.

The amendment was adopted, and on motion of Mr. Simonds, the blank was filled up with the sum of £100.

February 24.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

In Committee of Supply, this day, the sum of £3500 was voted for Grain Bounties, and a like sum for Fish