

Legislative Proceedings.

MR. WILMOT'S SPEECH

ON OUR CONNECTION WITH GREAT BRITAIN, AND THE COLONIAL POLICY OF ENGLAND.

Mr. L. A. WILMOT rose and said, that before the question was put on that resolution, he would like to say a few words on the subject, under consideration; and as a more favorable opportunity might not soon occur, he would also like to say something of matters which grew out of the question which they were then discussing, and to which he had recently devoted some attention. He would like to take a broader and more general view of this matter than that taken by the hon. members who preceded him. He wished for the present to leave the local question untouched, and endeavour to ascertain our true position as a unit of a great whole, an integral portion of a great Empire. While considering the subject of taxation, it should be ever borne in mind, that legislate as you will here, there was a legislature armed with Imperial authority, whose policy must be their policy—not from choice, perhaps, but from necessity. They may talk here of laying on this tax, and of removing that impost; of encouraging this branch of manufacture, and protecting that particular interest; but there was something which lay deeper than any measures which they could adopt, in which the social and political welfare of these Colonies was involved. Great Britain has given to her Colonies in North America representative institutions. She has permitted them to legislate on all that concerns their own affairs within the Colony, and she has lately extended the sphere of their legislative powers beyond the limits within which they were formerly confined. She has said to the colonial subject, buy where you please, sell where you can, and levy what duties you think proper on foreigners, provided you tax them all alike. This was indeed increasing the responsibility of that House to an extent which he for one could not contemplate without feeling that they were now placed in a new, and in his opinion, a dangerous position. This great increase of power had been placed in their hands, while the ability to render it subservient to the general interests of the Colonies, or to the strength of the Empire, was withheld from them. That power depended upon a legislature in which Colonists were not heard, on an imperial power whose commercial policy was felt for good or for evil, from the centre, to the extremities of the remotest of her wide-spread Colonies. As one who loved his country, who revered her institutions beyond those of any other country on the face of the earth—who loved his Queen, and was ready to rejoice in every thing which could add lustre to the sceptre of his Sovereign, he was bound to proclaim that there was danger in this power, unless the policy of the Empire was changed. What was the present policy of Great Britain? It was a pounds, shillings and pence policy, urged on by the cotton-spinners of Manchester, and the manufacturers of Birmingham, at the expense of the Colonies of Great Britain. It was a policy which undervalued the importance of the Colonies, and over-estimated that of foreign nations. It was a spinning-jenny policy which made threads and tapes and Birmingham small wares the standard by which to measure the value of our Colonial Empire. It was a policy which proclaimed, by the Manchester and Birmingham mouth-pieces in the British Parliament, that the Colonies were valueless, and that the sooner Great Britain got rid of them the better. Against such policy, as an honest man and a conscientious legislator, he was bound to raise his voice. He firmly believed that the policy which had laid the landed interest of Great Britain prostrate at the feet of cotton-spinners, and encouraged foreigners to grow bread for the millions of the manufacturing population, was a policy fraught with danger to the parent state, and destructive to the best interests of her colonial dependencies. Who would deny that the British Agriculturist, when he found that he could no longer pursue his avocations in the mother country to advantage, would seek elsewhere for a field for the exercise of his skill, and the investment of his capital? When he found the British market thrown open to the competition of foreigners, would he not seek in foreign countries for a new home, and having established himself and his family under a foreign power, would he not fight for that home and support the Government which protected him? It was contrary to reason and to all experience to suppose that he could preserve his allegiance to the power by whose act he had been expatriated. Would such a man come to the Colonies? He answered no! As a Colonist he would be entitled to no more protection in the British market than a foreigner, while the rest of the world were shut against him by high tariffs. Look at the position in which this Colony was now placed. We were told, buy where you please. This was all very well, but the people of this country could not buy unless they could also sell. What was the fact? Go to Nova Scotia and you are met with duties. Go to Canada, and imposts await you there. Go to the West Indies, and you must be taxed before you can dispose of your produce.—Go to the United States, and high protective tariffs meet you in the mouths of every port. But worse than all, go to England herself, the parent state from which we sprung, and there you are met by foreign competition, which jostles you out of her markets. Well might the mouth-

pieces of cotton-spinners and Birmingham manufacturers say to Great Britain, your Colonies are useless, cast them off, when such a policy was pursued. Well might they say, they are a burthen—get rid of them, if they were to be thus crippled in their efforts to maintain themselves. This was truly a pounds, shillings and pence policy, which measured the value and the feelings of Colonists by their capability to coin gold for its advocates. It was a rule of three policy, and might be thus stated: England exports to the United States of America, twelve millions, annually, and to her North American Colonies, three millions, annually. Therefore, as three is to twelve, so is the value of British North America to that of the United States. But in this miserable utilitarian calculation, the Colonists are forgotten to take into account that while the inhabitants of the United States consumed 17s. 6d. a-head, the inhabitants of the Colonies consumed £1 11s. 6d.

Against such language and against such reasoning he, as a loyal subject of the Empire, entered his most solemn protest. Was their national feeling to be considered nothing? Was their devotion to their Queen—their reverence for the institutions of their fathers—their anxiety to perpetuate the glory of the British name to go for nothing? but to take another view of the question. If these spinning and tape-selling gentry had any regard to the maritime power of Great Britain, they should take care how they used such language. He had turned his attention to the value of the commercial marine of these Colonies, and he found that out of 709,000 tons of shipping owned in all the Colonies of Great Britain, those belonging to the North American Colonies owned 466,000, more than one-half of all the other Colonies in the world put together. Out of 40,000 men employed in the navigation of this immense tonnage, 25,000 men were employed in the North American carrying trade. (Here the hon. member went into a rapid state of statistics through which we were unable to follow him.)

Was not this a nursery for the seamen which manned her fleets and enabled England to maintain her supremacy on the ocean, and should this the right arm of her strength, be palsied by the pettyfogging policy which would sacrifice national glory and strength for foreign traffic.—To tell him that the colonies of Great Britain were of no use to the Parent State, was to tell him what he could not believe. Hon. members might recollect the value placed on Colonies by the man who subdued the whole Continent of Europe. At the time when Napoleon stood on the heights of Ulm, on the day which preceded one of the most glorious naval achievements. At the very moment when surrounded by his generals that great man stood on these heights and saw the conquered legions of Germany defiling before him, with his victorious army in view, and Europe prostrate at his feet. In that moment of exultation, when his power was at its zenith, and it might have been supposed that his brain was intoxicated by the splendor of his victories, he exclaimed "I must do greater things than these; I must have Ships, Colonies, and Commerce." What! do greater things than subdue Europe? could there be yet a higher pinnacle of glory for his ambition to perch upon than to see the greatest monarchs in the world compelled to do him homage, while their dominions lay open to his victorious arms? Yes, there was still a higher step to ascend—a step which he never reached. To-morrow's sun rose on the array of hostile fleets,—and set giving Ships and Colonies, and Commerce to England won by the invincible prowess of British arms. (sensation). Such was the value of the Colonies in the eyes of a man who knew mankind, and knew in what the secret of national strength consisted. Were they to be told that things are changed, that Ships, Colonies, and Commerce were no longer necessary for the strength of the Empire; such doctrines were fatal to the true interests of Great Britain, mortifying to the feelings of her colonial subjects, and unbecoming the dignity of the British Legislature. It was not in this respect alone that the past policy of the British Legislature had operated unfavourably on her Colonies. They might depend upon it that little places made little men. Here they were hedged and fenced in from communication with each other by barriers which it was almost impossible to surmount, divided into petty principalities, which were in a great measure, independent of each other; and now almost independent in every respect. Each Province went on to legislate without regard to the interests of their neighbors, while at the source of effectual national legislation, there were none to represent their interests, none to proclaim their wants or watch over their privileges. Such a state of things he thought would not long continue; he trusted he would yet see the day when these Colonies would stand in a closer relation to each other, when sectional barriers would be broken down, and the glorious institutions of England equally diffused throughout British North America. At present the minds of the people of these Colonies were circumscribed by the peculiarity of their position. He had said that little places made little men; he believed it, and when some one belonging to the Colonies, whose mind had expanded beyond the narrow views, with which he was surrounded, and had turned his attention to science or the arts, for the benefit of himself and others.—What was the effect? That individual was immediately lost to his native country. There was

no field for the exercise of his genius or ingenuity. He was compelled to go to England or to the United States to find a field wide enough for him to operate upon, and it was but lately that an instance of this kind had happened in Nova Scotia. A young man belonging to the sister colony had turned his attention to mechanics, particularly to the construction of locomotive engines; in Nova Scotia there was no field for him, consequently he was obliged to go to the United States, to seek for employment, what was the result? That young man had discovered an improvement in the locomotive engine, the merits of which, in saving fuel and in the increase of speed, were so great that orders for no less than seventy of these engines had been received by his employers, in Boston, from all parts of the United States. This was but one example, but it proved the principle which he set out to establish, that if you narrow the sphere of action you counteract the development of useful talent, and that when, in spite of adverse circumstances, it bursts the barriers which confine it, you lose the benefits which are conferred on other countries by the natives of your own Province. There was still another danger and the greatest danger of any, to the minds of the youth of these Provinces, which had grown out of the operation of the former policy of Great Britain, and he would mention one circumstance to illustrate the feeling which prevailed in England some time ago, with respect to articles produced in these Colonies. When he had the honor to form one of the deputation to carry to the foot of the throne the address of that House, he and his colleague, Mr. Crane, sailed from a British port, in a British ship, and landed at a British port; the officers of the Customs came on board, their trunks were opened and searched, a copy of the Journals of that House was found. He remarked to the officer that they had come to England on public duty, that these bore on their face that they were public documents, but the answer was "I can't help it, sir, I must seize them," and seize them he did, and, for aught he knew, they were still in the Custom House at Liverpool. He mentioned this to show the jealousy which then prevailed with respect to any thing like Colonial manufacture or produce coming into England. (It is not so now, from Mr. Partelow.) He was aware that that feeling had been modified, but it still prevailed, he feared, to a great extent. Circumscribed as the Colonists have hitherto been, and as a Colonist himself, feeling that there were barriers erected round them which had cramped their growth, and set meets and bounds to the prosperity of their country, he felt it his duty to warn, as far as his humble voice could warn imperial power, that there was danger in the power now committed to Colonial Legislatures, unless the Colonial policy be changed.—He would bring only one example to show the effect of shutting out Colonial produce from British markets. There was a hat manufacturer in Saint John, who manufactured 3000 hats a year—this was all he could sell; open to him the British market and he could compete with the British Hat-manufacturer, and export 30,000. Let him cross the river which divides this Province from the State of Maine, and a market would be opened for him from Maine to Florida. Were he in the Councils of the United States, and wished to annex these Colonies to their great Union, he would counsel the Government to Free Trade with the British Colonies. Let uninterrupted intercourse be had with the United States, and restrictions imposed in England, and these Colonies would fall without the firing of a single shot. Let it not be said that he was disloyal when he gave utterance to these sentiments. He uttered them because he believed them, and he believed them because their truth was forced upon him by the experience of all ages. Let the people of this country be forced from the Home market, and their interests of necessity, will be interwoven with those of the neighboring States. Then when the hour of danger to British Institutions on the Continent of America arrived, when war was threatened, would these Colonies be ready as heretofore, to lay the whole available resources of the country at the disposal of the Queen's Representative, to protect the integrity of the British Empire, and maintain her foothold on the North American Continent? He feared such an intercourse must weaken those feelings of devoted attachment to the British Crown which British policy had forced upon them. But open to the Colonies the British market, let them have free and unrestricted intercourse with England and with each other.—Let the jenny-spinning policy of British statesmen be no more heard in the British Parliament. Let the voice of the Colonial subject be heard within the halls of her Imperial Legislature.—Let the interests of foreigners and of foreign merchants be made to yield to those of the native born subject of our Gracious Queen, throughout her wide dominions, and then England against the world! (Subdued applause.) It was love for the venerable institutions of their forefathers which prompted him to speak so plainly. If they saw a friend about to take a road which they knew to be beset with danger, would they not warn him to beware of the path which he was about to pursue? Was it not, then, his duty, and the duty of that House, if they saw danger in the policy of Great Britain, to warn her of the dangers which surrounded her Colonial Empire? Did they not see the whole of the noble Colonies of the West Indies laid prostrate by the policy which brought the produce of foreign islands and slave labor into competi-

tion with them in the British market? and if they believed as he did, that the same policy, if persisted in, would produce similar effects in this Colony. Would they stand quietly by until the evil day had arrived, which would throw them helpless and ruined into the arms of a foreign State? They did not want the bayonets of England, to protect her power within these Colonies. They did not require her fleets hovering on these coasts to maintain her authority.—All that they required was free intercourse with England, and with all her Colonies. Give them this, and these Colonies would soon be able to defend themselves. As loyal men, as good subjects, they were bound to give timely notice of approaching danger; and if it should so happen, that after knocking at the gate of the paternal mansion—after imploring admission beneath the roof of their forefathers—they were cast off and denied the right to enter the family circle, they would know at least that they had done their duty, and that the glory and power of Great Britain had not been tarnished by Colonial hands. He would say no more at present. The subject was of vital importance, and before the Session closed he would endeavour to throw together his views on this important subject; in the meantime, they must go on and form such a Revenue Bill, as, under the present circumstances, would bear as equally as possible on the community. He hoped the Committee would think of the matters which he had already brought under their notice, and at a future time he would be prepared to go more fully into the subject. In the meantime he thanked them for the attention they had given him.

(When Mr. Wilmot sat down, a round of applause burst from all parts of the House and Gallery.)

The question on the resolution was then put and carried without a division; and when the House resumed, a Select Committee was appointed to prepare a Revenue Bill.

FREDERICTON, 8th Feb., 1848.

DEAR SIRS,—There was rather a lively discussion this morning on the reception of a petition presented by Mr. Gowan, chief Clerk in the Crown Land Department, for an increase of salary. It appeared, from the statements made in the House, that when Mr. Gowan left the office which he held as Cashier of the Central Bank, that he did so upon the understanding that he should receive a salary of £300 a year. That when the hon. Mr. Baillie left the Department for a time, Mr. Gowan's salary was reduced to £200 by an order of the Government and that since that time he has received no more from the public chest. Mr. Gowan's application was warmly supported by a number of those who took part in the debate. His merits as a public officer were acknowledged on all hands, and the principal argument urged against the reception of his petition was based on irregularity, hon. members contending that the application should have come, either direct from the Government, or from the Surveyor General. Mr. Taylor, one of the members from York county, opposed the reception of the petition, principally on grounds of economy, contending that there was money enough paid for that office, for all the duties those connected with it were called upon to perform, and that there were some Clerks there whose salaries were nearly equal, in one way or other, to those paid to the Judges of the land. I am altogether in the dark with regard to the origin of Mr. Taylor's warm opposition, but I am much mistaken if we do not hear further of this matter before it is allowed to rest finally. All the other members from York were in favour of the application, and did justice to Mr. Gowan's ability. Mr. Tibbets, from Carleton, also paid him some compliments, which I am inclined to believe are well merited. On the question being put for the petition being received and referred to a Select Committee, there appeared for the motion 12, against it 17, consequently the petition is rejected.

On motion of Mr. Partelow, the House went into a Committee of the whole in consideration of a Bill to incorporate the Saint John Temperance Temple Company. Mr. Barberie in the chair.

Mr. Ritchie being called upon to explain the objects of the Bill, said that the Bill explained itself. A number of respectable individuals in the city of St. John were anxious to form themselves into a Company for the erection of a building, which was intended for the purpose of Temperance meetings, and other purposes connected with the philanthropic objects which these temperance people had in view. And to facilitate this object, they were solicitous to obtain an Act of Incorporation. The promulgation of temperance principles, was in his opinion a public benefit, and he would therefore willingly support the petition of the applicants for the passage of this Bill.

Mr. Boyd said he was afraid if they passed this Bill, their statute book would soon be loaded with Acts of Incorporation from all parts of the country.

Mr. Partelow was not at all afraid of loading the statute book with Acts of this description. The cause of temperance was a glorious cause, and he rejoiced to see it prospering, as it was now doing in St. John and throughout the country. The building which this company proposed to erect would be an ornament to the city, and afford the philanthropic projectors facilities for promulgating their praiseworthy objects.

Mr. Wark hoped he should see applications for such incorporations from every county in the Province; he had no such fears as the hon. member from Charlotte, and was delighted with the progress which temperance was now making. He would support the Bill.

Mr. Carman had no objection to temperance societies, nor had he any to this Bill, and so long as legislation was confined to matters of this kind, he would gladly lend temperance societies his aid, but if they should ever attempt to coerce others who