

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, April 25.

A bill entitled "The Official Oath Act, 1876," was read the third time and passed, and a bill to change the place in Charlottetown for holding the Sheriff's Court for purposes of election was passed through the several stages.

LAND IN SUMMERSIDE.

A bill to vest in the town of Summerside the land and premises therein mentioned, was read the second time and on moving that it be referred to committee Hon. Mr. Strong said it was well known that when the railway was being constructed, a certain piece of land was purchased for a depot in Summerside, and it was afterwards considered advisable to remove the station nearer the water. The piece of land first purchased had remained in the hands of the Government, and the citizens had made application to have it appropriated for a park or public square, for sanitary and other purposes. He thought no arguments were required to show the propriety of acceding to the request of the citizens for they had purchased all the land, even the streets. A plot of ground had been purchased for a square, but it had been taken for county purposes by erecting a court house and jail upon it. Their honours would readily admit that a public square was necessary for the comfort and health of citizens, and now was the time to procure land for that purpose. The Government had done much for Charlottetown and Georgetown, but Summerside was not originally intended for the County town, though it has become such, and the citizens were now looking for the last time for some assistance from the Government, for it had recently become an incorporated town. He was glad to see that there was a disposition to do justice to the citizens. The square was to be carefully guarded, no buildings, shows, circuses, &c., were to be allowed upon it. It was a valuable gift as the original cost of the piece of land was about \$12,000, and no doubt the citizens would ever be grateful for it. Perhaps his honour the President would object, but Georgetown was only a town in name. If it would show equal enterprise with Summerside there was no doubt but the Government would be willing to encourage that town also, but it had a large common and a market place more remarkable for stumps than anything else.

Hon. Mr. Laird agreed with all his honours' remarks except that it was the last time Summerside would look for anything from the Government. He thought his honour must have a presentation that the Government would not be long in power, and he wished to limit their successors. Charlottetown was much older; the Government had done much for it, and it appeared that the time for the last gift had not arrived. This year the Government had granted Charlottetown almost a whole year of the country property, and the town was in a thriving condition, there would be wants, and while this was a handsome gift which would be appreciated by the citizens, he yet looked upon it as only an instalment of what was due to Summerside.

Hon. Mr. Balderston said that \$12,000 was a pretty large instalment, and he did wonder that his honour (Mr. Strong) tried to disarm opposition by saying that Summerside would not ask for any more. He hoped the Government did not intend to purchase the people of Summerside for political purposes. He hoped the people of Charlottetown would not be asked for an equivalent in the shape of a park to beautify and adorn their park. Though it was also a valuable gift to Charlottetown, yet the people had not been called upon to pay the money for it. As for Georgetown, he was disposed to help the weak, and would support a grant of money to assist the people there in making public improvements.

Hon. Mr. Dodd was willing to support the bill, believing that the people and representatives of any town knew better what they required than the people residing at a distance did. He was glad that the people of Summerside got around the Government so far as they had such a good prospect of getting a very expensive park. Charlottetown was about a century old, and had long been trying to get a piece of land for a park, but the Government were very penurious, even with what cost them nothing.

Hon. Mr. McDonald thought the bill was asking for a little too much, but he supposed it would be very little use for the members from King's County to oppose it, for the members from Queen's and Prince Counties appeared to help each other. His honour the Leader of the Government was fond of having a slap at Georgetown, but if he would go and see it, he would find it as beautiful a place like Summerside. In Summerside the railway site cost the Government an enormous sum, but in Georgetown it cost nothing.

Hon. Mr. Munn remarked that Summerside ought to thrive, for it was costing the Government large sums. There was a golden shipyard there, and he supposed there was to be a golden park. Georgetown was so well laid off that it did not require to have a park purchased at the expense of the Government; but in Summerside it appeared that they first sold the land and then sold the streets. It was not surprising that the land was so dear, for it must be very scarce.

Hon. Mr. MeEwen in the chair. Hon. the President remarked that the gentleman who said the piece of land referred to must have had a good deal of foresight; but this costly plot of ground was now to be given to that thriving place—Summerside, at the expense of the people of the whole Island. He would not oppose giving it to them, but other places should have equal advantage. When the representatives of Georgetown applied for any grant they were told that it was a finished town, but in Summerside was not finished yet, and it was to be built, in part, at the expense of the country at large. He considered that Georgetown should have some equivalent. The want of a steam ferry boat had long been felt and was retarding the prosperity of that town. A few years ago the Legislature gave a grant and subsidy of £200 for a ferry boat, but when it was built Charlottetown got the benefit of it. He hoped that when they were giving such a large grant to Summerside the claims of Georgetown would be overlooked.

Hon. Mr. Dodd thought it was rather too stringent to prevent exhibitions of any kind from being held upon the square in Summerside. It was not likely that it would be fenced and made a park for some time to come.

Hon. Mr. Balderston approved of the clause. Exhibitions would destroy the place for the purpose for which it was intended.

Hon. Mr. McGill denied that there was any combination upon the part of representatives of Prince and Queen's Counties as had been said. He would be as willing to support a grant for King's County as for Prince County.

Hon. Mr. Dodd said a similar bill was rejected by this House last session, because, as the lines were proposed to be run, it would not give the citizens all they should have; but he was glad to find that the House of Assembly had now granted what the Council had contended for. He was very glad that the House of Assembly had seen the error of their ways, and had now come to a more just conclusion. It would be a great boon to the citizens, and he hoped they would be in a position to make it into a nice park.

Hon. Mr. Walker also expressed his satisfaction that the House of Assembly had not agreed to what the Council contended for last year.

Hon. Mr. Laird remarked that Exhibitions, &c., were to be excluded from this park as well as the one in Summerside. He presumed, however, that it was not the intention of the promoters of the bill to prevent the fair ladies of Charlottetown from showing themselves. Old Kentucky was famed for fast horses and fair ladies, and when the progeny of the recently imported Kentucky horses would become numerous, as of course they would, there would be a fine opportunity of driving around the shore, and showing the fleetness of the horses and the beauty of the ladies. Perhaps this was the reason why the bill was before them in its present shape. He would congratulate the citizens upon being so highly favored.

The bill was reported from Committee agreed to without amendment, and then read the third time and passed.

CITY OF CHARLOTTETOWN. The House resolved itself into a Committee of the whole for the further consideration of a bill to amend an Act for the Incorporation of the City of Charlottetown. Hon. Mr. Dodd was still unable to see the propriety of passing this bill without the amendment proposed by this House. He therefore moved that the amendment be adhered to.

Hon. Mr. Laird was of opinion that the Corporation should have power to raise revenue from whatever source they thought proper, but he was in favour of levying a tax which should require the assent of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, so that there would be time for the people to petition. It did appear strange that 600 citizens should petition against the passing of this bill. It was an admission upon the part of the petitioners that the people of Charlottetown were not fit to govern themselves. This was a humiliating acknowledgement from a city which had been the seat of Government for over a century. Half the members of the City Council were elected every year, and five, with the Mayor, could control the City by-laws, and therefore, presumptions of the Legislature to lay down rules for them. They should be able to do without leading strings, or they could not be as wise as they sometimes pretended to be. He believed, however, that if the citizens were left to themselves, sufficient talent and honesty would be found amongst them, to place good, and faithful men at the head of affairs. To tax the stock of merchants did appear somewhat extraordinary, but perhaps it would have a tendency to relieve the depression of trade, for if a heavy tax were laid on, importations would probably be so large. He was of opinion, however, that it was enough for representatives to exercise the power their constituencies gave them, but the City Council were asking for power which they did not possess when elected. If it was considered advisable to give them increased power, it was right to place that power in the hands of those to whom it of right belonged. Let the people then elect representatives to carry out the law with no instructions and no responsibilities. He believed they would then have no talent, new energy, and perhaps a little more honesty in the City Council. It was disgraceful to have laws which would prevent the best men from being brought to the front. It was admitted by those who proposed the bill that the city required more funds, and, therefore, he believed it would be better to pass the bill with a proviso that it should not go into operation till there would be an election of the whole of the City Councils. He would move an amendment to that effect, if the amendment before them were adhered to. If the Councils were sincere they could resign their positions at once, otherwise the law would remain a dead letter until August 1877.

Hon. Mr. Munn said that although he had opposed the bill he was not opposed to giving the citizens power to tax themselves, but in the manner in which taxes were proposed to be levied was unfair. Bank Stock was to be taxed in one way and merchants' goods in another. If it had been proposed to tax the profits of merchants he would not have opposed the bill.

Hon. Mr. Walker would vote for adhering to the suggestion of this House. The promoters of the bill should listen to the voice of many influential men of Charlottetown. The Common Council would be able, under this bill, to tax what they pleased, and there would be no court of appeal.

Hon. Mr. Bolger would support the suggestion of his honour the Leader of the Opposition. The citizens should have power to govern themselves.

Hon. Mr. Laird had yet to learn that the people of Charlottetown were incapable of governing themselves. He believed that the bill would be the means of awakening them from their lethargy, and they would bring men to the front who would be a credit to the city, and would levy taxes in a fair and equitable manner.

Hon. Mr. Balderston did not think they would be justified in rejecting the bill. If the suggestion of his honour the Leader of the Opposition were adopted, it would probably make the people more alive to their own interests. He would give the Common Council unlimited power of taxation, providing their by-laws required the approval of the Governor in Council. It appeared that the people themselves could not agree with respect to this measure, and, therefore, the Legislature could not be blamed for rejecting it; but as the City Government was largely in debt, and said that if they did not get more power to lay taxes they would have to sell some of the city property, he thought it would be better to pass the bill with the amendment suggested by his honour the Leader of the Opposition.

the members of the Legislature were to theirs. Where was the difference? Hon. Mr. Walker said there was a great difference, as the City Council both made the laws and administered them.

Hon. Mr. McGill was inclined to give the City Council the power they asked for, and discussed the bill as an opportunity of voting against them. He did not see why his honour from the East Point (Mr. Walker) who said the Council was composed of good and efficient men, should be so afraid that they would abuse their power. There might be a factious Executive Council who would not sanction the by-laws of the City Council if their political views did not harmonize.

Hon. Mr. Laird disclaimed any intention of instituting anything against the City Council; but he wanted to give the people an opportunity of electing men with the powers the Bill would confer.

Hon. Mr. Strong was of opinion that all the by-laws of the City Council would have to receive the sanction of the Governor in Council before they could be enforced. The suggestion of his honour the Leader of the Opposition was to amend the bill so that the fundamental principle that the people were the source of power. The people should have an opportunity of deciding whether or not they would not give assent to a tax which was to be levied upon furniture, and goods upon the shelves, and leather in the shops. It was not Bank Stock, but the dividends that were to be taxed, and the same principle applied to merchants who had sound and equitable. When those more immediately interested were differing upon this Bill how were country members to decide? He held the opinion that the people of Charlottetown had a perfect right to control their own affairs. If they were not capable of doing so they had better throw up their hands and let the Local Government manage the town as well as the country. When the Legislature gave up control of the City, they retained a right to do, that certain conditions should be complied with. Before responsible Government was granted to the Province the people had to comply with certain conditions, and it felt to be his duty, as a representative of the people to see that the conditions were complied with, and if they were he would not interfere with their measure. He saw that the bill was defective, but the City Council required funds, and if they did not obtain increased power to levy taxes they would have to sell the fire engines and discharge the policemen. He was inclined to make an attempt to reconcile without amendment. There was necessity for the Bill, and the principle of it was sound. The delicacy was in matters of detail. He was, therefore, inclined to support the suggestion of his honour the Leader of the Opposition, though he was apprehensive that the result of city elections would not be different from what they had been until the constitution and the principles upon which the election were held were amended. There was no property qualification for electors; there was great room to buy votes, and many, he had no doubt, were influenced by improper motives in voting.

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