

habit of discussing public matters, and representing public opinion so that the Government was in the habit of receiving advice, but he would ask whether there was anything in the circumstances of the case which would warrant the continuance of this present condition of things? It was further pointed out that county councils were a kind of training school for those entering upon the more important field of usefulness in the Legislature or Parliament. In this House the three members from Simcoe were members of the County Council. But while the people might be willing to pay something for this, yet, he thought, they were not willing to pay the amount now being enforced. Suggestions had been made that they should adopt the American system of dividing the counties into electoral districts, and electing every two or three years a man to represent them at the County Board. Again, it was proposed that the powers of the Township Councils should be extended and give them full power to deal with county roads and bridges. At the present time every road was considered a county road which divided townships, and every bridge upon these roads as county bridges, and it was proposed to put all these on the townships except the roads and the bridges on them dividing the counties. Again, it had been proposed to wipe out the County Councils as elective bodies, and by the extension of the powers of this House do much of the work here. He was not in favour of this. Another one was that instead of having deputy-reeves, give one man the vote of all, but he could not support such a scheme. The only other scheme was that introduced in the bill of the member for North Middlesex of increasing the number of voters entitling the municipalities to additional representation, but as he had pointed out at the time the bill was considered, the obvious objection was that it would tend to increase the disparity at present existing between the amount paid by the municipalities and the number of representatives. Taking his township he found that it paid about \$3,000 into the County Treasury, while about twelve municipalities only paid a similar amount altogether. He concluded by remarking that he had been asked from many quarters to continue his course upon this matter. York County Council had asked that the number be diminished, and the Agricultural and Arts Association had moved in favour of the change.

Mr. DRYDEN agreed with the motion. He was of the opinion that a great deal of the business could be done by county valuers and county assessors. The only argument in favour of the old system was that the County Council was an educational institution where our young men could be educated to fill higher positions in the legislative halls, but the question was as to whether it was worthy of such a large expenditure of money.

Mr. MCKAY said the expenditure last year of the Council in his riding was less than \$4,000. He approved of the motion and was in favour of some scheme being adopted by which this large expenditure could be reduced.

Mr. O'CONNOR favoured the motion. He thought the principle of limiting the number of county councillors had already been admitted by the House, because in the Act giving farmers' sons the right to vote the Government had reservations of these councils. They discussed other questions affecting the public mind.

Mr. GIBSON (Huron) thought it would be just as well to let things as they were. In the county of Huron the expense to each ratepayer on account of councillors' indemnity was ten cents. If the representation was reduced by the deputy-reeves the cost would be reduced to four cents each ratepayer. This decrease in expense was a small matter.

Mr. BAXTER did not think there was a strong demand in the country for reducing the representation in county councils, and there was no complaint of the expense. The people are greatly wedded to our municipal institutions, and the councils were doing an admirable work. He thought it might be well to leave it optional with the larger counties to reduce the representation.

Mr. PHELPS looked upon the question merely as a matter of cost. He thought it might be well for large counties to be divided up into districts larger than townships to send representatives to the county councils by which the number of representatives might be lessened and the expense diminished, while the people would still be represented. He was in favour of the motion and having the whole question investigated.

Mr. CARNEGIE referred to the opportunities that villages and municipalities had of increasing the representation in county councils. It was an open question whether farmers' sons should be counted in when ascertaining if a municipality was entitled to send a deputy-reeve to the council. This question should be settled one way or the other by the House.

Mr. LEES favoured the reduction in representation to from 10 or 20 members.

Mr. MACKENZIE said the feeling in favour of reducing the representation had been growing of late, but it was not sufficiently strong as yet to sanction the House making a reduction.

Mr. MEREDITH said this was a matter the Government should have taken up and dealt with by them. He charged the Government with a failure to deal with practical questions. The question here was one of expense. The institutions of the Province were many and expensive, from the township councils up to the Local and Federal Legislatures. He did not believe

in interfering with our municipal institutions, but he agreed this was a question for which some remedy ought to be provided. If our institutions were ever to fail it would be because of the expense attending them.

Mr. MOWAT said he had listened to the debate with great pleasure, especially as it had been discussed without any party feeling, except on the part of the leader of the Opposition, who commenced his remarks by saying the Government had failed to deal with practical questions for twelve years past.

Mr. MEREDITH—I said three years.

Mr. MOWAT was glad to hear, then, that his hon. friend acknowledged the Government had been doing practical work for at least nine years. His hon. friend had alluded to the fact that if our whole system of government should break down it would be because of the expense attending it. The speaker failed to find, on comparing the Dominion with other countries, that the expenses of the former were greater than any of the latter. Municipal institutions, from the township councils up, were of great value. When they were first established it was said by men of high reputation the municipalities would be dangerous to the country, that they would be so many sucking republics; but so far from their having proved dangerous, entirely the reverse had occurred. A large part of the prosperity we have enjoyed since their establishment has been owing to them. The powers given the municipalities at first are less than the powers they have now. The Legislature has been going on adding

to their powers from time to time, and there is probably not a session passes in which they do not add to the powers of County Councils and other local bodies, and almost all such legislation has been approved of by both sides of the House. With regard to the positions of County Councils there is no doubt a pretty largely felt sentiment that they are too large for the work they have to do. He was not aware that his predecessor had talked of taking up this subject until his hon. friend had just stated it, but he knew he had called his (the speaker's) attention to it when he took his place as a question likely to come up. The speaker had given attention to the subject, and had always endeavoured to ascertain the feeling of the country on it. He found the feeling had been growing in favour of reduction, not largely, but still growing. The difficulty in the way, however, was the finding of a remedy. No strong opinion was entertained on any proposed remedy. The appointment of the committee was the best thing that could be done under the circumstances, and he hoped the committee would be able next session to give them all the facts regarding the matter. The result would be one of two things. It would either satisfy the country the present system was the best on the whole that could be devised, or the committee would be able to suggest a system that would be an improvement.

Mr. CREIGHTON found that last year the expenditure for County Councils varied a great deal. In 1879 the county of Simcoe paid to councillors some \$6,079, while the county of Brant paid but some \$300. The amount per head paid to the members of the County Councils were:—For Bruce, \$40 per head; Grey, \$64; Hastings, \$75; and Simcoe, \$112 per head. In Ontario during 1879 there were some 990 County Councillors, averaging an expenditure of about \$46 per head. The great objection urged against County Councils was the question of expense. In the county of Grey it was about three cents per head of the population. If they were going to decrease the expense it should be a sensible decrease. The plan of forming the county into electoral districts was forwarded by the hon. member for Simcoe. This plan was open to a serious objection, as if the area of these districts was of any size the election would become a political one, which would be disastrous to the municipal institutions. (Hear, hear.) He suggested that instead of a popular election the members should be elected in some manner by the different Township Councils of the county. He was heartily in accord with the resolution. There was another question which had agitated the people, and one which the House would have to deal with. That was the reduction of the members of the Legislature. He believed that the sentiment of the country was that a smaller body would do the business of the Province much more expeditiously and much more economically than at present.

Mr. MORRIS expressed his satisfaction that the Government were about to accord to the member for Simcoe a committee to investigate this subject. The hon. gentleman thoroughly understood his subject. He was highly in favour of the appointment of such a committee.

Mr. BRODER questioned if there was a feeling in the country that the county councils were too expensive. The matter should be seriously looked at before making a change in the municipal institutions. The school system depended upon the good working of the municipal institutions. It was a strange township which was not able to send two or three men to the county council for a few days.

Mr. PRESTON thought the motion was in the right direction. They should get all the information possible on this important subject.

Mr. ROE objected to the House going to any great expense on a question of this kind, when the remedy was in the hands of the people.

The motion was carried, and the following Committee was appointed to take the matter into consideration:—Messrs Dryden, Waters,