

ministration of the affairs of the country, taking every branch of the public services, every branch of industry, and he ventured to say that what the hon. gentlemen had said was borne out by the facts—that was that the province of Ontario stood second to no state in the union. He was glad to find in the speech from the throne an emphatic declaration of the intention of maintaining the connection between this country and the mother land, and the statement that all the rights and privileges which any citizen in Ontario could desire could be had under our present system. This evidenced, what to his mind was plain, that the great majority of the people of the country, Reform and Conservative alike, were utterly and determinedly opposed to sacrificing the commercial or political independence of the Dominion of Canada. In these times of unrest, times when the future of the country was being discussed, it was important that at the meeting of the legislature the emphatic declaration should be made that there was a practically unanimous opinion throughout the country that the people would never surrender either their legislative or commercial independence to any country in the world. He thought it was the greatest mistake possible to attempt to put down any discussion of the future of the country or to attempt by any high-handed means to stifle public discussion. The only way in which the weakness of the case of those who spoke for annexation and those who spoke for any other change in the political condition of the country could be demonstrated was by allowing free and open discussion, so long as it was conducted within constitutional and reasonable limits. Mr. Meredith, continuing, criticized the administration of the crown lands department and the policy of disposing of the forest wealth of the province, even though high prices were realized for timber limits. A radical change of policy was required. The forests should be conserved, and those parts of the country from which the timber had been taken should be reforested. He expressed his approval of the intention of the government to take up and improve the ditches and watercourses act, and also spoke favorably of the proposal to amend the law in regard to the voters' lists, objecting, however, to the application of the principle of minority representation to Toronto alone, the object of which he said was to give the government another supporter. He regretted that the government had not yet dealt with the question of the mines and minerals of the province, and expressed the belief that there was a strong feeling in the country that something ought to be done to encourage the development of the resources of the province. Another matter of regret was that there was no proposition in the speech from the throne in regard to desirable changes in the assessment laws. He was pleased to see that the government proposed legislation in regard to the treatment of juvenile offenders. Mr. Meredith complained of the lateness of the time at which the house had been called to meet, and said that while anxious to facilitate the progress of business, he would be compelled to insist on the constitutional right of the opposition of having sufficient time allowed them to examine the accounts and consider the estimates. Finally he congratulated Sir Oliver Mowat upon the distinction which he had recently received at the hands of her majesty.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S REPLY.

Sir Oliver Mowat said that the hon. member (Mr. Meredith) had spoken so nicely that he had no heart to say anything in reply. He had referred to him (the speaker) as the good Oliver Mowat, and as the saviour of the province, and after that how could he oppose him? (Laughter.) The hon. member had referred to the providing of a retiring room as an act of foresight on the part of the government, as the commissioner of public works or he (the speaker) might one day be occupying it. In this view the hon. member was entirely in error. He (Mr. Meredith) had been so long sitting in a seat of discomfort that the hon. commissioner was anxious that for the remainder of his political life he should be more comfortable in the house—(applause)—and

surely that was an object in which the commissioner was to be commended. The leader of the opposition now had accommodation similar to that provided in Ottawa, and he hoped, and they all hoped, that he might long live to enjoy it. (Laughter and applause.)

The mover and seconder of the address had made speeches showing them to be intelligent and well-informed members of the house and good debaters. He concurred in all that had been said regarding the lieutenant-governor. He was a fellow-townsmen of his own, and he (the speaker) had often spoken of his ability. He understood thoroughly the constitutional duty of a governor, and although all his life belonging to a party not represented by this government, he acted as a constitutional governor should. It was of immense importance to confederation and constitutional government that when the lieutenant-governor was appointed he should forget that he was a party man, and should act as fairly as her majesty would under like circumstances. Every lieutenant-governor he had had to do with in the past twenty years, he was glad to say, had acted in this manner, although in the majority of cases they belonged to another party. (Applause.)

There was one other reason why he should not be fierce in his reply to the hon. member. Many parts of his speech had been devoted to praise. He had spoken of the progress of the province in very strong terms, but he (Mr. Meredith) knew that he could not use an expression stronger upon that point than he (the speaker) had often expressed. But what the Liberals complained of was that the progress might have been still greater. They complained that the country had not been permitted to make as much progress as if a different trade policy had been pursued. (Applause.) Then the hon. member had shown his loyalty to our constitutional relations and to our Queen. He (the speaker) sympathized with him there, and the speech was in the same vein.

The hon. member had expressed approbation of the government's endeavor to deal with the voters' lists, and had pointed out some of the difficulties they all recognized and desired to remove. He agreed with the hon. member that the changes should be made before the next election, and this was the purpose of the government in preparing the bill. Any announcement of the scope of the measure at present would not be so necessary, as the bill itself would be in the hands of the members within ten days.

The crown lands policy had met with the approval of the country. The hon. members opposite had urged that a timber commission should be appointed, but the government had opposed this because no commission could get any more information than was already in the department. The hon. member had objected to the policy of the department in regard to the sales of timber. Our system was better in every way than any system ever adopted by any republic or state, any province of the Dominion or by the Dominion itself. Take, for instance, the timber of the Dominion. They had parted with their timber, but in such a way that instead of getting the highest price the profit got into the hands of political favorites. For a small sum important limits had gone in that way. That was not done in Ontario as every one knew. Then the hon. member said they were using up their capital. Well, even so, he ought to remember that no better policy has been adopted anywhere else, not even by his friends at Ottawa. The policy they were pursuing at present was the best, and practically the only policy in the interests of the country. If they did not sell the timber it could not be preserved, and it was of immense service that they should sell to those who would have a direct interest in its preservation. A single fire would cost millions of dollars, and if not sold from time to time it would take a perfect army of men to guard it, besides the greater encouragement given to trespassers under such a system. With regard to the mining policy, they had not yet quite matured the course that was under consideration. Anomalies in the assessment laws had been referred to, but it was extremely difficult to obviate these, and many older states had grappled with the question with less success. On the whole he was quite satisfied with the hon. member's speech, and glad to know that they could agree on so many points. (Applause.)