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THE  
D E B A T E  
IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
ON THE MOTION OF THE  
RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT,  
FOR LEAVE TO BRING IN  
A BILL, TO AMEND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE  
PEOPLE OF ENGLAND IN PARLIAMENT,  
ON MONDAY, APRIL 18, 1785;  
WITH A  
CORRECT LIST OF THE DIVISION.  
  
L O N D O N :  
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MDCCLXXXV.

## T O T H E P U B L I C .

THE measure of a proposed Reform in the Representation having engrossed the public attention, it is conceived that an Authentic Detail of *the Debate on Mr. Pitt's Motion*, accompanied by a *List of the Division*, will be generally acceptable. The People without doors, as well as their Representatives, entertain diversity of opinions on the subject; the Debate, therefore, which comprehends every argument for and against the measure, must necessarily contain much useful information, and gratify laudable curiosity.

It is not the object of this Address to insist on either the expedience or the utility of a Parliamentary Reform; because, a measure which hath divided in opinion the most illuminated characters of the age, ought neither to be slightly discussed, nor dogmatically decided on. There is one particular, however, to which the Public attention should be directed: Previous to the Motion of Mr. Pitt, for leave to introduce a Bill which would have had for its object a Reform in the Representation, not any Specific Plan, within the line of practicability, had been suggested: The Advocates for a Reform, in their zeal for the end, have either entirely forgotten the means; or, if they have condescended to suggest any thing like a mean, it has had too much the air of a Project, to have merited serious notice. Infinitely to the honour of Mr. Pitt, the Plan of Reform which

TO THE PUBLIC.

his Motion was designed to introduce, was the best which human wisdom could have devised for the cure of any supposed defects in the present state of the Representation. It was the best possible measure, because, in the present state of things, perhaps it was the only practicable one; and it had this pre-eminent advantage, that it would have enhanced the consequence, without augmenting the number of the Representatives: The ancient foundations would have been strengthened but not removed.

To those, therefore, who interest themselves in Political Concerns, the subsequent Debate is addressed; and, if after perusal, it shall be decided that the weight of argument is in favour of a Parliamentary Reform, let it in justice, in candour, and in truth, be admitted, that preference should be given to the Plan of Mr. Pitt: His measures are not like speculative theorems; they are calculated for national utility; as his life is consecrated for public service by active virtue.

May 9, 1785.

PARLIA-

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

MONDAY, APRIL 18, 1785.

THE Chancellor of the Exchequer rose; and in a most masterly and eloquent speech (replete with beauties of oratory, force of argument, and correctness of reasoning), that kept him up two hours and a half, and which was delivered to one of the fullest Houses we ever saw assembled on any occasion, proceeded to state his Proposition on the subject of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

He began with observing, that if the question to which he was to have the honour of calling their notice that day, had not so long engaged the attention of the House, and of the Public, its magnitude and importance were so obvious, that it would have been sufficient for him barely to have stated it, in order to have drawn to it that serious consideration to which it stood so amply entitled. They had, he remarked, from their earliest infancy, imbibed a reverence for the Constitution of the Country; not a blind enthusiasm for the Constitution that would not let them see its few imperfections as well as its many excellent and glorious advantages, but a real regard for it, founded on good sense, and a just estimation of the value and importance of the blessings derived under it, in consequence of the share the people had in their own government. This it was that constituted its chief excellence, since it made it the object of the general interest of the People, and rendered it peculiarly deserving of their veneration and watchfulness. He said, it had engaged his attention and regard, from the earliest period that he had been engaged in the politics of the country; and though the more he examined it, and the more he compared it with the Constitution of other countries, the more he was led to admire it, and to feel its superiority over that of every country in Europe, yet, superior as it was, he was obliged, upon conviction, to declare, that it was not altogether exempt from those imperfections to which all human institutions were more or less liable. Absolute perfection, undoubtedly, was not to be expected; but it ought to be the endeavour of every man, who professed or felt the least love and reverence for that Constitution, so peculiarly

cularly favourable to the liberties of all who lived under it, to carry it as near to perfection as from its nature it was capable of being rendered. Impressed with this idea, and sincerely anxious for the securing to the Public that Constitution to which they all stood so much indebted, he had at a former period offered his thoughts on the necessity of adopting some Proposition or other, by way of alteration and reform, with a view to keeping up the popular weight in the balance of the Constitution, and of adapting it to the circumstances of the times, and the peculiar situation of the moment. What he had at that time felt, with regard to the necessity for some alteration, had been since strengthened and confirmed by each day's experience, at a period not unfruitful in political events. The subject had long engaged his mind, and the more he reflected upon it, the more he was convinced, an amendment on sober and deliberate grounds was necessary to all the parts of the Constitution; the balancing of which exactly was the circumstance which made that glory and happiness Englishmen so much boasted of, and foreigners so much admired, as the peculiar characteristic of the British Government. Formerly he had experienced the misfortune of failing in the different Propositions he had at different times urged, a failure that might easily be accounted for on a variety of grounds: he rose, however, with different hopes of success that day. With regard to that House, it was entirely a new question; nor was it only a new question to the House, but totally and completely a new question. The vote of last year had not, he observed, been decisive upon the question that had been then proposed; but the question he should have the honour to move that day, had never been rejected by any House of Commons, nor stated in any public assembly. It was not, he said, on general topics that the present question ought to be decided, but upon its own particular merits; all he had to beg therefore, and that he did most earnestly implore, was, that they would lay out of their minds all previous prejudices, and all opinions formerly entertained upon the general topics of Parliamentary Reform. On those general topics, barely and nakedly stated, there could be no diversity of opinion. That the Constitution of this country ought not to be lightly touched, or experimentally altered, merely upon speculation and visionary fancies, was an opinion that no man could contradict; as little was it to be denied, that if there were defects existing in the present state of the Constitution, and which might be amended without risk in the attempt, that they ought not to be deterred by imaginary and by loose and general alarms, founded on supposed designs of dangerous innovation and experiment. Having stated these two undeniable positions, he broke out into a most animated eulogy on the Constitution, which he termed the noblest proof of human wisdom, and the noblest specimen of the favour of Providence, which every man must wish neither to endanger nor to tarnish, but to secure to posterity which all its advantages; and this, he said, could only be done by recurring to its first principles; to restore it to which, was the object of his wish. He was happy, therefore, to say, that the outlines of the measure he should propose

gave the fairest prospect of success. A House of Commons truly representing the People of England, was not a question of exact representation, or of the exact share which every individual had in the Government of the country; but such a representation of the People in Parliament as should closely connect the representative body with all their constituents, and preserve and secure the sympathy of the Constitution. In effecting this, he did not expect absolute and complete perfection; but it ought to be their endeavour to aim at obtaining the true end of the Constitution, and restoring its spirit more completely. It was their duty to look at that object seriously and earnestly. With this view, let them turn their eyes back to the original principles of the Constitution, and they would see that its grand principle was, that the People should have a share of the Government, by a just representation of them in Parliament. No man would disagree to those leading principles, nor would any man deny, that if the Constitution was to be framed anew, that the existing mode of representation was not the most likely mode of insuring the sympathy of the Constitution, or of preserving the interests of the People. Undoubtedly, as it stood at present, there were gross and palpable defects in the mode of Representation, which called loudly for Reform, but he was perfectly sure that such reform must be effected by some temperate and moderate alteration, gently administered. The great obstacles to an amendment in the mode of Representation, and the objections most insisted on by those who were the professed enemies of Reform, he took to be these: First, an alteration in the number of the Members of that House; secondly, any attempt to alter the mode of Representation by disfranchisement of Boroughs as an Act of Power; and, thirdly, the general dread of innovation and experiment; and these three, he considered as including all the principal objections to an alteration in the mode of Representation; but the latter he took to be the strongest objection of all; the danger of innovating upon a fabric, built with so much wisdom, and under which so many blessings had been experienced, having been laid most stress upon by the enemies of Reform, who had contended, that the making one amendment would unsettle the foundation of the Constitution, open a door to more amendments, and that there would be no end to alterations in future. [A cry of *Hear, Hear!*] The measure which he should propose, had, he said, a tendency to extinguish these objections, to give the Constitution an uniformity, to render future alterations wholly unnecessary, and as far as in the nature of things was possible, to make our free Constitution immortal. This, he trusted, would appear, when he should state to the House the detail of the Plan he had it in his contemplation to propose; it was only necessary for him then to declare, that he should neither propose to alter the number of the Members, nor to disfranchise by an Act of Power any one man in the country, nor to shake the foundation on which the Constitution stood, nor in fine to make any innovation whatever; but merely to recur to the original principles of the Constitution, and restore them. There was one leading principle in our Constitution, that had existed from the earliest periods, viz. that no

interest

interest in the country was unrepresented. Upon referring to the History of Parliaments and the Constitution, it would be found, that when Parliaments first began, the Representation consisted of a Representation of the Landed Interests, and a Representation of certain Cities, Towns, and Boroughs of the Kingdom. The earliest period when Parliaments took any precise form, or became in any sort respectable, was in the reign of Edward the First, from which time to the reign of Charles the Second, there had been various additions and diminutions made. It was evident, therefore, that what he should propose, so far from its being unprecedented, was warranted by precedents in all periods of our history. It had been an original principle, to lodge a discretion in the executive authority to summon to Parliament. That discretion now no longer existed; perhaps it had not been always well exercised, but it was in principle to be exercised on public grounds and for public objects. It remained for them to enquire into two circumstances: First, if it had been exercised otherwise than discreetly; and secondly, if alterations that had taken place since the period in which it had been exercised by the Crown, had made it inapplicable. Gentlemen had undoubtedly read, that of the Boroughs which used formerly to send Members to Parliament, *seventy-two* had been disfranchised; that was to say, that the Crown had ceased to summon them at General Elections to return Burgesses to the House of Commons. After the Restoration, *thirty-six* of these Boroughs petitioned Parliament to be restored to the exercise of their ancient franchise; their prayer was granted; and to this day they continued to enjoy it. But the other *thirty-six* not having presented any Petition on the subject, had not recovered their lost franchise. Various alterations had, he said, been made at different times. At one time the Boroughs were added, but the Counties were nearly stationary. The last addition to them were the two Counties Palatine. In that manner they continued for a considerable time, till the Principality of Wales was added. Then came the Revolution, and since that, the whole kingdom of Scotland was added by the Act of Union. So that the present alteration was no new measure. Nay, so long ago as the reign of Edward the First, 100 or more Boroughs were added. It was, therefore, he said, just as fair to contend, that the present was not more the true Constitution of this Country, than that was, which existed in the time of Edward the First, or at any other period subsequent to that reign. On this he raised much argument, in justification of coming forward with a Proposition to apply a remedy to the defects in the Constitution; and said, that possibly pride, laziness, or timidity, would not suppose that what they all admired could be found defective, and would in consequence press an idea upon the House that no alteration could take place without a breach in the fundamental principles of the Constitution. He should contend, nevertheless, that there would be no breach in the Constitution, in discontinuing such Boroughs as were unworthy, and indeed they had recently acted upon that idea, in the cases of Shoreham and Cricklade. His wish on the present occasion was, to lay down a principle in one instance that should

should not be left to caprice or uncertainty, but should be a constant, active principle, that should maintain the Constitution the same at all periods; and he would boldly appeal to the House, whether those who argue for names and shadows, or for the substance and vital principles of the Constitution, did most argue in favour of the Constitution? He begged the patience of the House to hear him state a principle limited and final, complete and adapted to all times; a principle that would serve as a barrier against any indefinite and arbitrary alteration of the Constitution. Adapting the state of Representation to the circumstances of the country, he contended, was not contrary to the principles of the Constitution; his intention therefore was so to model the Representation of the People in future. The particular statute that disabled the King from altering the existing mode of Representation, he stated to be the Act of Union, which fixed the respective number of Representatives between the different parts of the country, and so they had remained ever since the statute passed, although the circumstances of the times were extremely varied. To give a full security to all the interests of the Country, was, he observed, the first principle of that part of the Constitution, and it was wisely adapted to the purpose; but there were nevertheless seeds of future abuse in the Constitution as it stood, without the possibility of a future remedy; but though this was undeniable, still the enemies of Reform would not listen to any positions to apply a remedy. Let us not, said they, endeavour to improve nor to endanger the Constitution; neither let us try to make it better, for fear we should make it worse: generally view'd, Mr. Pitt declared, it might be a wise consideration, but if deeper examined, it would be found to be far otherwise: if they could separate the defects of the Constitution from its perfections, so as to take away the former without injury to the latter, it was undoubtedly their duty to do it; for however wise their ancestors had been, they had still left much for the virtue of their descendants. Let them then endeavour to give solidity, consistency, and uniformity to the Constitution. Its merit had not shone forth at once, but had been the result of gradual improvements. The sterling excellence of it had survived the corruption of the most corrupt times, and kept alive the true flame of Liberty in the country. In consequence of the alterations that had been at different times made in the Constitution, these essential advantages had been obtained, viz. that Parliament should be assembled as often as the exigencies of the country should require, and that Parliament should meet every year, to hear and redress the grievances of the People, before they voted Supplies. To obtain these, there had been long struggles, and many difficulties; but they had substituted nothing for the discretion formerly vested in the Crown, but which since the Act of Union, was no longer existing; in consequence of which, all the mischiefs they had experienced, had happened. The good sense and the reason of the subject had been early apparent. Let them look to James I. a Prince who mounted the Throne with high ideas of the Prerogative, and who was not to be suspected of being too partial to the Liberties of the Subject. Yet even to that Prince did the danger of summoning a Parliament, at the discretion of the Crown, appear to be

be so unfit to continue, that measures were taken respecting it, though they were not afterwards carried fully into effect. Again, in the time of the Protectorate, Lord Clarendon, the great historian of those days, stated, that the number of Knights was proposed to be made greater, and the number of Burgesses smaller. He also spoke of the reign of Charles the First, and said, the principles of Freedom gave rise to the Opposition against that Monarch; that the Opposition degenerated first into licentiousness and next into tyranny, a natural consequence. He did not quote from these reigns as reigns affording any authority or precedent, but as an illustration of his principle of correcting the Constitution, and with a view to shew that the seeds of some of the most essential benefits and advantages this country enjoyed, had been sown in the worst of times. The defects of our Constitution had, he said, existed from its infancy; he wished therefore to provide against a return of the mischiefs those defects had produced, and gradually to bring together all the perfection the case was capable of.

Mr. Pitt at length proceeded to state the outline of his Plan, which latter he said consisted of two parts; the first the most pressing and most immediate; the second (without the introduction of any new principle) to rectify it hereafter. The House he meant to propose should consist as it did then, of 558 Members, but to have a larger number of Representatives for the more populous and opulent districts, as a general principle. The first feature of the Bill was to provide for a transfer of about seventy, or seventy-two Representatives from Boroughs, which either have fallen to decay, or are like to do so; and the criterion to decide by should be the number of houses, which would be extremely easy; this addition to be distributed among the different Counties and the metropolis, as they stood in need of them; the number to be limited by the nature of the thing, and not ascertained by any arbitrary line. If too many were added to Counties, he observed that they would be liable to two objections, which were these: 1. It might be objected, that too many would be chosen for each: or, 2. That if Counties were subdivided, there would be too few Electors to choose the Members. The thirty-six Boroughs were to be disfranchised on their own voluntary application to be disfranchised, two ways, either as an act of power, or to make it their own act, by some compensation offered to them.

He next opened the second head of the first part of his Plan, by stating that the only method of carrying this into execution, was by providing a fund for the purpose of giving to the owners and holders of such Boroughs as should apply to be disfranchised, a compensation for their property. Even considering the burthens that the People already laboured under, he declared he should not think it difficult to find a fund for this purpose, as the situation of the country was less gloomy than many men imagined. He meant, he said, not to have the Boroughs estimated, but appreciated; for as it was well known the holders of them had found a way to convert them into a source of profit, as well as the other parts of their estate, he might venture, without any affectation of

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extraordinary delicacy, to speak out at once upon the subject. This being a fact, and the representations of the Boroughs in question not being exercised as a trust, they certainly ought not to be suffered to remain in the hands of their present owners any longer. He stated farther, that the compensation was to be taken without discontent or dissatisfaction, by acquiescence and consent, and not by force and compulsion. Such he said was the mode by which he hoped to attain his object. He spoke of the laws that tend to correct the criminal laws against bribery and corruption. The Boroughs, he said, might be transferred, in fact, as any other estate, without bribery or immorality; declaring he was ready to throw a veil over the fact, if we could be free from the inconvenience. He spoke of the different burgage tenures, on a less scale, possessed between an individual and a species of Electors in shares, and said there was a reasonable probability that there might be a compensation, that it might behove the country to offer, which might be accepted; but the rule should be general, and the same condition given to one sort as another: all the inconsiderable Boroughs to be put on a footing. The manner of carrying this plan into execution, he stated as follows: If a majority of Electors should offer to relinquish, the natural question that would arise would be, who are the Electors? Let that question be referred to the Committee sworn under Mr. Grenville's Bill to try the question of right to a seat. He contended that there ought to be no discretion in the sum to be offered, but then it ought not to be exactly equal to each Borough-holder, because there were different classes of Borough-holders; some held in perpetuity, others had only a life interest in a Borough, and others again were in expectancy of a reversion. The number of Boroughs he stated that would be to purchase, were thirty-six; he meant therefore to set apart the money for each, to let it accumulate at compound interest. Thus, if the sum set apart was not a sufficient compensation, it would become one by laying by, as it would increase till it became irresistible.

The above, he said, was the first part of the Plan, by which much was gained by the Constitution of the country. Another part he would state, to shew the extent of the scheme, and to prove it to be as comprehensive and as complete as possible. When all that ought to be added to Counties were added, the number must either be added to the number of the whole House, or transferred from those Boroughs which are still small and inconsiderable (within a certain size) to Cities and great Towns, who from time to time shall best deserve them. He said further, as the sources of Representation are, first, to give to Counties which have not their share; secondly, to allot to the Towns and Cities, which shall be considerable enough, and desirous of receiving more, or who from their population shall be best entitled to it; and this rule to remain to operate, *in perpetuo*, as Boroughs fell into decay. This shewed at once the extent of the system; and would, he flattered himself, remove the alarms that prevailed upon the subject, by establishing a consistent and complete system, and a final one, as far as the principle goes. There was an end therefore



to the objection, that this would lead to danger and to perpetual alteration; on the contrary, it would lay that important question at rest; a point so desirable, that he hoped it would induce the House to go the length, at least, of considering the Bill he should have the honour to bring in, in case he should have the good-fortune to be permitted to bring one in. And he trusted, the House would consider it with partiality, as a matter which the People of England had called for at different periods, sometimes more and sometimes less.

Having thus gone through the two parts of the Bill, Mr. Pitt proceeded to state, and to answer the probable objections that would be made against his Proposition; and first, he mentioned the expence it would load the Public with. If the measure was a good one, and it was agreed to be an important one, the money, in his mind, that it would cost, would be well applied. It would give security to the Constitution, to the Liberties of the Country, the dearest Rights of the People at large, and to their freedom, which was truly invaluable. Let them be economical (and they could not be too much so) in some other instance, but in carrying the Propositions he had made into execution, they would prevent prodigality; and were they to spend millions upon such an object, and had they done so at an earlier period of their history, and been thereby enabled to have prevented the calamities and disgraces that had befallen the country, what cause would there not have been for solid satisfaction and triumphant exultation? Here Mr. Pitt seemed to point at the American war and its consequences; after which he said, the progress of the Plan would be gradual, as he did not intend it to take place instantly in its full extent, that it should not affect the seat of any person chosen for the whole Parliament. If the plan were adopted in that Session, there would be no man but who ought to be satisfied. And in the interim till it took effect, the People of England would have the happiness of being represented by the present House of Commons, chosen as that House had been by the free voice of the People. On choosing the next Parliament, if any Borough were, after the Parliament had begun business, to petition to be disfranchised, the fitting Member should vacate his seat. There was, Mr. Pitt said, another point that he had accidentally omitted in the earlier part of his speech, and that was, his intention in Counties to increase the number of the Electors as well as the number elected; but what he meant to do in this respect, was extremely simple, and totally distinct from the idea of universal representation; he meant merely that another species of persons of property, besides freeholders, should also have votes for the County; he alluded to copyholders, who were in most respects in the same situation as freeholders themselves. Having stated this, he took a general view of the principle of the measure. He said it was practicable and beneficial; that it was a principle deeply rooted in this country; that the Representation as it stood at present, was inadequate, and that some amendments were necessary; that they had leisure, and a fair

fair opportunity for a full discussion of so important a matter then; but that if it should have come before, when in a moment of difficulty and distress, it would have been impossible to have done justice to it; that the imperfections in the state of the Representation weakened the confidence the People had in the Representative Body, and the love they ought at all times to be encouraged to entertain for the Constitution. It was to that confidence the country owed all her former strength, prosperity, and splendour. It was true, that the country had prospered as the Representation stood at present, but if we had prospered, we had also suffered; bitterly and grievously suffered; suffered for the want of this amendment, and by means of Parliaments having a boundless and unlimited confidence in a Minister, and continuing to entertain that confidence after the Minister had lost the confidence of the country. The Representatives had a common interest with their constituents, the People of England; it became therefore the duty of every man in that House to cement the union, and strengthen the connexion between the people and the popular branch of the Legislature. The alterations, he repeated it, would be better made in the moment of peace and of reflection, than in a moment of turbulence and of public misfortune; he hoped therefore that the House, by its conduct that day, would afford permanent and lasting satisfaction to the friends of the measure of Reform. The fixed and steady principle of the Proposition would lead the House no farther; if therefore there were dangerous and alarming plans of Reform in the contemplation of any wild and visionary speculators, the best way to put an end to the dread of any danger likely to arise from such rash and ill-digested innovations, would be to adopt the motion he was just about to offer to the consideration of the House. Mr. Pitt concluded with declaring that he should feel a degree of satisfaction, which no other measure could ever afford him in his life, if he should be the humble instrument of securing by that regulation the dearest interests, and the future liberty and happiness of the People of England. He then moved,

“That leave be given to bring in a Bill, to amend the Representation of the People of England, in Parliament.”

Mr. *Duncombe* rose to second the Motion. He said, that if, after the sense of the People on the subject of Reform had been so clearly ascertained, the Minister had not come forward and proposed some measure upon the subject, he must have expected but a small share, in future, of that grace and confidence at the hands of the constituent body, which was in fact a Minister's best support. The manner in which the Right Honourable Gentleman had opened his Propositions, and the Propositions themselves, Mr. *Duncombe* said, did him the highest credit. They met with his entire approbation, and should have his hearty support.

The Motion having been read,

Mr. *Powys* rose, and in a very able speech, stated his objections to the Propositions. The subject matter of the Motion had now, he said, been brought forward in a more formidable manner than ever. It was no longer the suggestion of a private individual, but it had

had been brought forward by the Minister as a measure of Government. He complimented the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the abilities and eloquence he had displayed in the funeral oration he had delivered on the Constitution of his country, in order to render which immortal, he had put an end to its existence. He said it was very extraordinary, that the Right Honourable Gentleman was in such haste to apply a remedy before he had proceeded even to inquire, much less attempted to prove, that any evil existed. He begged leave to call the attention of the House to the subject and sentiments of the several Petitions that had been presented, praying for an alteration in the state of Representation. He then read from the Votes, extracts from the several Petitions from Nottingham, Norwich, York, &c. and commented upon each. The Petition from Nottingham, he said, affected to speak in the name of a vast description of persons, by whom it had not been signed. He should have been glad to have known of what the Petitioners had to complain. The Petition appeared to be so worded, that the object of it could not be obtained by a Reform of Parliament, but by a Reform of the manners of the age; for it was clearly to that the Petition went. The Norwich Petition was signed by no more than 1200 persons, who appeared in this very singular light—that at the time they were asserting, that a free Constitution could not be enjoyed, until the House of Commons should have been reformed, they were paying the highest compliments to the present House, reposing the greatest confidence in its wisdom and patriotism; and declaring, that it spoke the sense of the People at large. If all this was true, he should be glad to know, from what the Petitioners could deduce the necessity of a Reform. The Yorkshire Petition came unquestionably from a great and respectable County: but did the plan opened by the Right Honourable Gentleman answer the wishes and expectations of that County? He believed it did not; and that he would acquire no addition by it to his reputation or popularity. The Right Honourable Gentleman had assumed it as a fact, that Members for decayed Boroughs must have separate interests from the People; but he was of opinion that the assumption was unfounded—He remembered that a Noble Lord, nearly related to the Right Hon. Gentleman, (Mr. T. Pitt, now Lord Camelford) had once made a motion in that House, which did him infinite honour; which would have done honour to the Representative of the first county in the kingdom. It was—“That this House is bound to listen to the Petitions of the People.” This surely did not make him appear to be a man who had separate interests from them; and yet, he was not, at the time he made that motion, the Representative of a County, or a great Town; he was Member for Old Sarum, one of those Boroughs doomed, by the Right Hon. Gentleman’s plan, to be disfranchised. He observed, that if the franchise of decayed Boroughs was given up, the Right Honourable Gentleman ought to set the example to the rest of the nation, by the sacrificing at the shrine of Reform the Ordnance, Treasury, and Admiralty Boroughs. He did not conceive that there could be any necessity for reforming the Representation of the People at present, unless it appeared that the House

of Commons, according to its present Constitution, is utterly incapable of speaking the sense of the People; but if any Member should venture to assert that it really was incapable of speaking the sense of the Nation, he would refer him to the speech of his Majesty at the opening of the present Parliament, in which the Minister boasted that the sense of the People had been taken by the new Election; and the Right Honourable Gentleman had frequently boasted since, that the voice of this Parliament was the voice of the People.—With what degree of decency then could the Right Honourable Gentleman say, in the face of so popular a Parliament, that the House of Commons cannot, unless reformed, convey the sense of the Nation? A late Administration, it might perhaps be said, had been an Administration of corruption; and upon its ruins was raised an administration of *opinion*; and a good opinion unquestionably must be entertained of it, when it was known that it did not entertain or cherish any one who had been formerly an agent of corruption.—(At this ironical expression there was a loud roar of *Hear!*)—He said he felt himself inclined by curiosity to consent that the Right Honourable Gentleman should have leave to bring in his Bill; but when he considered the fatal consequences it might produce, his curiosity was checked; and he was resolved to give a flat and direct negative to the motion. There were other Reformers abroad, who, though they would undoubtedly vote against the different parts of this Plan, would nevertheless consent to the introduction of a Bill of Reform; it would be a great point gained by them; it would be then the standing place, the *fulcrum*, which alone was wanting to enable them to toss the Parliament about, as Archimedes would have done the world. In order, therefore, as far as in him lay, to nip their expectations in the bud; in order to set this question of Reform finally at rest, he would not have recourse to a motion for the order of the day, a previous question, or adjournment; he would not attempt to get rid of the motion by a side wind, but would most heartily give it a direct negative.

Lord North said, the Honourable Gentleman had given him comfort by what he had said in the conclusion of his speech, viz. that he would not agree to any concession, but would give the motion his direct negative. Undoubtedly that was the sort of treatment the motion ought to receive, and it was the line of treatment he should himself adopt respecting it. Curiosity, he said, had in more instances than one greatly misled mankind; and he should have thought the Honourable Gentleman had given way to a most fatal curiosity, if he had rashly and unadvisedly countenanced for a moment a direct attack upon the British Constitution, a Constitution, the work of infinite wisdom, the source of many blessings, much happiness, much glory; a Constitution richly deserving of that warm praise which the Right Honourable Gentleman had bestowed on it, in far better words than he was master of, and with a brilliancy and glow of eloquence that would have adorned the meanest subject of panegyric, but which was well employed in decorating



and describing the most beautiful fabric that, perhaps, had ever existed from the beginning of time. He never would give his consent to any attempt to tamper with such a fabric, unless a very strong case could be made out to prove it stood in need of some repair. That case had not yet been made out, neither had any the smallest shadow of proof been yet given that it required any assistance whatever. Of an existing evil he knew nothing; the blessings that had been derived under the Constitution he knew well; they all knew them, they stood recorded in the historic annals of the country; they had been felt for ages; they were felt at that moment. The Right Honourable Gentleman had talked of pride, of laziness, of timidity; perhaps, out of the abundance of his civility, he meant to apply those words to him. Was it fair, that because he happened to differ from the Right Honourable Gentleman upon a great and an important subject, a subject in which they were all deeply and personally interested, in which the country itself, and the Constitution that they were all so ready to extol, were deeply interested, because he happened to differ from the Right Honourable Gentleman upon a question of that magnitude, he was to be attacked and treated with a degree of harshness which was not, which could not be merited by any Member of that Assembly; was it pride, when he was called upon to vote in support of a requisition to be permitted to tamper with the Constitution, to say, shew me first the necessity? Was it laziness, to say, when it is stated that a remedy is wanting, to insist on having the evil stated to which that remedy is to be applied? Was it timidity, when called upon to unsettle the foundation of that glorious fabric, the work of his ancestors, to desire to pause, before he consented, and to enquire for why he should consent to undo it? His Lordship then took notice of the manner in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had glanced at the American war. As that was not the subject of the day, and bore no sort of relation to the question then under consideration, his Lordship said he would not at that time go into any discussion of it; he would only repeat what he had often said before, viz. that whenever that question was properly brought forward, he was ready to meet it, conscious, that though we had been unfortunate in the war, though the war had been calamitous to the country, no blame was ascribable to him on that account; the war was the war of the People, began at their instance, and at the instance of that House. Those were facts so undeniably true, that he wondered how any man was bold enough, in the face of those who were then sitting in the House, and knew the facts that he had stated so well, to start a doubt of them. Having said this, his Lordship returned to the immediate subject of the day, which he treated with great severity. He said, on a former occasion, when the Honourable Gentleman behind him had risen to reprobate the idea of tampering with the Constitution, (for that was the fourth, if not the fifth time, that it had been under discussion;) when the worthy Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. Powys) had desired to have the Birmingham Petition read, those who were friends of what they called Reform, but what he should call Ruin, had sent a paragraph to the newspapers, stating that the Noble Lord

Lord in the blue ribband would not have long to boast of there being no Petitions, for there would soon be Petitions enough on the table. How happened it, said his Lordship, that there is no Petition from Birmingham now; nor in the whole more than eight Petitions? The Right Honourable Gentleman, it was true, had said in his speech, that a Reform had been called for by the People, sometimes more, and sometimes less. So aware was the Right Honourable Gentleman, that the small number of Petitions that had been presented, necessarily created an argument against the Motion, that he had thought it prudent to endeavour to weaken the force of that argument, which he foresaw would be urged, by saying, with an indifferent air, that the Reform had been called for by the People, sometimes more and sometimes less. What was he to understand from that observation? Was he to take it as a proof, that the People did really call for a Reform at that time? Was he so far to accommodate what they saw, and what they did not see, and to take both as a proof that the People of England wished for a Reform? The Petitioners who had subscribed the Petitions that were on the table, certainly did wish for a Reform; and if he were to admit, that those who had not petitioned, equally wished for a Reform, it was going a good way to meet their wishes, because in admitting so much, they spoke by their presence and by their absence; by their prayers, and by their silence. Well might he say with the man in the Rehearal:

What horrid sounds of silence doth assail mine ear?

Having sported with this idea, his Lordship said, the people of Birmingham were wiser than to call for any innovation in the Constitution. As little did he believe, the majority of the People in any part of the kingdom wished for a Reform. He knew there had been a meeting summoned in the first city in the empire, (London) by special notice, for the express purpose of instructing their Representatives; and there he was informed, though the meeting and the business of it had been publicly announced and was of general notoriety, only 300 attended. When they were about to instruct one of their Representatives, he declared his readiness to obey his constituents; but expressed a wish, that he had seen more of them present at the meeting, because he felt some difficulty in proceeding to act, as 300 instructed him, when, by the absence of 8000 of his constituents, he was induced to imagine, that they did not very highly approve of the business they were convened upon. His Lordship said, he was aware that one Gentleman present at the meeting had said, in answer to what he had just stated, that the 8000 who were absent, meant by that very circumstance to signify their concurrence in any resolution the 300 should come to. This was, his Lordship said, rather a curious sort of logic, as he believed the House would readily agree; but it was not a whit more extraordinary, than the idea that the People of England were to be supposed to wish really for an alteration in the state of Parliamentary Representation, when

when they did not ask for it. He reminded the House of the Circular Letters of Mr. Wyvill; and of the great pains that had been taken to stir the question in all parts of the kingdom. If, therefore, the people in general really desired any alteration, they would have petitioned in great numbers from most of the different towns for it. His Lordship entered into all the ancient History of Parliaments; and stated accurately the degrees and gradations Parliament had passed through from their first institution, accounting rationally for the discretion of the Crown, that had been formerly exercised, by stating that originally the chiefs in feu, who held of the Crown, and were liable to suit and service, were summoned; and being at the time chief tenants of the Crown, were at the will of the Crown assembled either wholly or partially. Afterwards, when they had divided their lands, property became more dispersed, and money grew more scarce; in consequence of which, the lesser Barons were spared, on account of their inability to bear the expence of parliamentary attendance. Again, at a subsequent period, another change was made: after that, another, and, by degrees, Parliament was settled on its present footing, where, his Lordship said, he heartily hoped it would long be suffered to remain, and not be disturbed on account of any chimeras that entertained the brains of visionaries and speculatists, who were not, he verily believed, aware of the serious mischiefs they had employed themselves about. All the idea of the necessity of a Reform, he was persuaded, was the mere vapour of a dream, the shadow of a shade, empty whim and fanciful nothing, from which the Right Honourable Gentleman was endeavouring to conjure up something; but he relied on the good-sense and sound reason of the majority, trusting that they would break the spell, and prevent the magicians from practising on a subject that ought to be held sacred. His Lordship said, even admitting, for the sake of argument, and he should not wish to be thought serious in admitting for a moment that any alteration was actually necessary; yet he should contend that the alteration proposed was not adapted to the feigned evil. He begged to know, where there existed in Europe, or on the face of the globe, a People so happy as those under the British Constitution? Where was there a People so fully in possession of their Rights and Liberties? The fact was undeniable; what matter it then, whether persons who sat in that House, the guardians of the Public Freedom, sat by virtue of having been elected for a burgage tenure, a Borough, or a County? While the People's rights were secure, and their liberties safe, why was it necessary to go into a minute inquiry how they came to be secure and safe? The means were provided by our ancestors, and had been sanctioned by experience, the test of truth. His Lordship said, the Right Honourable Gentleman, like a quack, was desirous of having the dose swallowed, whether the patient had any disease or not; and, like a true empiric, would insist upon it that his pill was specific, and would cure patients in all cases and under all circumstances. The subject was too serious to be ludicrous upon; but he would just state, that the Right Honourable Gentleman reminded him of the Mock

Doctor

Doctor in Moliere's farce. He said, he supposed the Speaker had either seen or read the book, and would recollect, that a man's daughter is supposed to be *dumb*, and he sends for a physician to cure her. The Doctor comes, and soon restores the girl to the use of her tongue, which she exercises so fluently, that the father offers him another fee to make her dumb again; when the Doctor replies, "he can't do that, but if he pleases, he'll undertake to make him *deaf*." Having set the House in a roar, his Lordship again returned to argument; and said, it was of late become a custom, to lay hold of a strong epithet, and apply it to any particular phrase that was meant to be made use of to deceive and delude the People. Thus he had heard of the Spirit of Liberty, the Spirit of Freedom, and the Spirit of the Constitution: what was meant by the latter, as applied at popular meetings, he knew not, nor he did believe those who used it, knew themselves. For his part, he had always conceived that the Spirit of the Constitution was to be looked for, and found, in the common law of the land, and in the practice and usage of Parliament. It was enough, in his opinion, for the People to be happy and free. With regard to the idea of the country gentlemen making a considerable part of that House, the idea was a very just one: he was ready to admit, the bulk and weight of that House ought always to be in the hands of the country gentlemen, who were, undoubtedly, the best and most respectable objects of the confidence of the People. Their disinterestedness, their virtue, their public spirit, he admired. They were undoubtedly fitted by their education and their situation in life more peculiarly for Members of Parliament, than almost any other description of men in the kingdom; besides, they had the greatest stake in the country after all, and were the most deeply interested in its welfare; because, let what would happen, men of business and manufacturers could go and get their living elsewhere, but a country gentleman could not quit his native country because he could not carry his estate away with him. But for God's sake, had not the country gentlemen their share in the representative body at present? Was it merely the representatives of counties that were now country gentlemen? Let any man look round the House at that moment, and then let him say whether he did not see many very respectable characters, who were country gentlemen, Representatives of large Boroughs? His Lordship ended with an emphatic wish, that the friends of the Constitution would feel as one man, and arouse at the danger it would be put in, if the present Motion were carried; he therefore hoped, they should have the triumph of carrying it in the negative; for if a door were once opened to innovation and experiment, there was no knowing to what extent it might be carried. He gave the Right Honourable Gentleman full credit for not intending, if he should prove so successful as to carry the present Motion, to go any farther; but the Right Honourable Gentleman could only answer for himself. Other Ministers might make what the Right Honourable Gentleman had done, a plea for doing something more; and again, other Ministers after them, till there would be no end to innovation and experiment.

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Mr.

Mr. *Wilberforce* remarked, that the dread of innovation seemed so much to prevail in the minds of certain persons, that in order to avoid it, they took care to reject even any new ground of argument; and the House was now entertained with a repetition of the same observations and the same jokes which they had so often heard before on similar occasions. There was, he said, one peculiar excellence in the Plan now submitted by his Right Honourable Friend, which no attempt had been yet made to dispute, and which indeed was liable to no objection. This was that system of gradual and progressive improvement which must proceed to rectify and meliorate the state of representation, according as those circumstances should arise, on which it was calculated to operate.—It would also tend, in his opinion, to diminish the progress of party and cohesion in this country, from which, he was well convinced, our greatest misfortunes arose. There were men and parties in this country, which derive most of their power and influence from these burghage tenures, against which the operations of this Bill were to be directed. By destroying them the freedom of opinion would be restored, and party connections in a great measure vanish; for the consequence of coalitions, and parties formed on one side of the House, was, that similar engagements necessarily were formed on the other; and for his part, he wished to see the time when he could come into the House, and give his vote, divested of any sentiments of attachment, which should induce him to approve of measures from his connection with men. The objection made to this Bill, from its not making provision for the reduction of Treasury Boroughs, did not by any means apply, as no person can tell but these Boroughs may be the first objects of the operation of the Bill: those Boroughs had been long objects of jealousy to him; and he declared that every merit this Bill possessed, in his opinion, would be much diminished, were not the ministerial Boroughs to be of that number which were likely to come first under these regulations. He urged the necessity of Reform from various motives. Foreigners had high conceptions of our Constitution; but what would any foreigner, who had been accustomed to admire it, imagine its situation to be, were he allowed to pass the line of political speculation, and dive beyond the surface, to view its secret intrigues and present corruptions? Would he pronounce it to be that mellowed, that meliorated system, which the Noble Lord had represented it to be? He contended that the American war, though, perhaps, originally the war of the People, was finally that of the Minister, and had been ultimately carried on by that miserable system of corruption which was the source of all our misfortunes, and which called so loudly for immediate rectification. He was satisfied that the People had been disgusted with the Constitution last year, rather than enamoured with it. The People were not a mob of undistinguishing beings, but an assemblage of discerning mortals, who were quick sighted, and were not easily deceived.—They had observed the dangers to which they had been exposed by the defects of the system, and they wished that all future risk should be

totally

totally removed. They had not, however, lost their veneration for the old fabric. But if those beauties, if those intrinsic excellencies, which they had been accustomed to admire, were destroyed; if the Constitution were allowed to be impaired by corruption, and to sink into decay, they would soon cease both to love and venerate it. He concluded with explaining the circumstance of the Yorkshire Petition, which he declared he would not have recommended, had he been consulted, thinking it totally unnecessary, from the application which had been before made to Parliament on the subject. The best proof that the opinion of the Nation at large was for a Reform, needed no other confirmation, than that no Petition had been presented against it. Mr. *Wilberforce* approved of the Propositions highly; and said, he thought his Right Honourable Friend deserved more praise for having brought forward the motion, than for all the many services he had before done his country.

Lord *Mulgrave* declared his hope that the motion would either be carried unanimously, or rejected, because he thought if it were carried, and there appeared to be a considerable majority against it, it would lead to infinite mischief. His Lordship said, if the majority thought with him, they would reject it, as he saw great danger in countenancing any attempt to build up and erect a Constitution on speculative Propositions. His Lordship declared he approved of the Propositions better in the shape in which they stood in the motion, than in any shape that they had before been brought forward. He praised Mr. *Pitt's* eloquence in his speech, in the warmest terms; but entered an elaborate protest against any endeavours to new mould the Constitution.

Mr. *Rushworth* read an extract from Hume, relative to the extract from Lord Clarendon, mentioned by Mr. *Pitt* in his opening speech, shewing that the alteration in the state of the Representation alluded to in 1656, was nothing more than an artful design of Cromwell's to get rid of his unpopularity, incurred by his despotism and tyranny. Mr. *Rushworth* appeared to be well versed in Constitutional knowledge; and spoke on the side of Mr. *Powys* and Lord North.

Mr. *Isaac Hawkins Browne* spoke very shrewdly and forcibly in support of the motion. Mr. *Brown* also animadverted on the extract from Lord Clarendon, and reminded the House of the maxim, that time was the great innovator, and that it required frequent changes adapted to the circumstances of the times, as they presented themselves, to keep things as they were intended to be at first.

Mr. *Fox*, after the many occasions on which he before expressed what his sentiments were on the subject of a Reform in the Representation, should not consider himself under any great necessity of troubling the House, if there had not been extraordinary circumstances attending the introduction of the present question. That he had always been a friend to the principle of the Bill, was a fact which did not require to be now repeated. Whether the means taken to effect that principle were such as were most unexceptionable, must remain for future discussion, but could not provoke his opposition

to

to the motion. There remained ample opportunities in the future stages of the Bill, to examine and correct it; opportunities which in themselves would be the highest acquisition. In the review which had been taken of the question that night, there were means used to implicate the American war in the subject now under discussion, by suggesting that it was supported by the influence of burghage tenures, and that if they had been withdrawn, that war would have had a more speedy termination. He acknowledged that it would have been in the power of the Parliament to bring that war to a period, had they considered it as an improper one; but the manner in which it must have been done would be such as he should little expect to hear recommended from the Gentlemen on the other side of the House. When the delay of a few days in passing the Supplies was represented last year as the most heinous proceeding, what would have been the enormity of stopping, not the Ordnance Supply, as *was* the case, but all the other Supplies also, as *would* be the case in the event which might here take place. This would be a conduct worthy of a Parliament in certain situations, and would shew them to be sensible of their due weight and importance in the scale of the Constitution, and not the instruments of a superior power, kept for no other purpose but to register edicts, and perform an annual routine. Much had been said of the merit of dissolving that cohesion which was said to subsist in the parties in that House. That cohesion did subsist, was a truth in which he took too much pride, to think of denying, and from which this country derived too much advantage, to be an enemy to; his connections were formed on liberal and systematic principles, and could not be dissolved by any regulations, while the same union in sentiment and principles continued to cement them. When an Honourable Gentleman said that parties on one side of the House occasioned similar engagements on the other, he should have considered that it equally applied to one as to the other; but there might be some circumstances which might induce that Honourable Gentleman to look forward with eagerness to the dissolution of such attachments, if they obliged him to support and defend measures in which his opinions did not correspond; if they found him to act one way and think another.—Under such circumstances, it was perfectly natural that he should pant to be disengaged from such connections, and resign the load which seemed so much to oppress him. To that principle, which by a diminution of the Members for Boroughs, tended to increase the proportion of Representatives for Counties, he was sincerely and cordially a friend. But while he was thus explicit on the subject of his approbation, it was but just to mention, that there was another point to which he totally disagreed; with all respect, which he always paid to a House of Commons, and among the rest, to the present House, he could perceive in it no superlative excellence, no just superiority which could justify the suspension of the operation of this Bill. To defer for a period of years any system of Reform, however partial and inadequate, was by no means complying with the declared wishes of the majority of the Electors of this country, whose voice, though by no means to be acknowledged as that to which the House

House of Commons must conform, when they were directed by any sudden impulse, as the opinions of a moment; should always be obeyed on points which the experience and consideration of years had taught them finally to decide on. The People, notwithstanding all that had been said, had no peculiar obligations to this Parliament, for uncommon instances of that propriety of conduct, which could warrant so implicit a reliance in it. No very flattering proofs of extraordinary attention to the Rights of the People had been given by his Majesty's present Ministers, in their support of that excellent measure, the Westminster Scrutiny; and no very splendid testimony of their prudence in financial concerns, could be drawn from the Commutation-tax.—This was a proceeding, the hardship of which they already felt, and there were some others now in agitation, which were not likely to turn out much more favourable. These only were the reasons the People could have for a reliance in the present Parliament. He did not however mean to say any thing which could be construed into invective against them. He had before been accused of insulting them. He did not know that he did so, but if heat should have led him at any time to say any thing which could have that appearance, he was exceedingly sorry for it. There was nothing in any of these circumstances which could impress them on his memory; but he had observed, that nothing he ever said in his warmest moments, had ever drawn forth so much passion and ill temper on the other side of the House, as when he attempted to praise them. The Right Honourable Gentleman had in this instance receded from those opinions, which on two former occasions he seemed to maintain, and the alteration which he now made, for the purpose of a specific plan, was infinitely for the worse. It was in vain that he endeavoured to qualify the objections which the idea of innovation raised in the minds of some, by diminishing the extent and influence of Reformation—From the earliest periods of our Government, that principle of innovation, but which should more properly be called amendment, was neither more nor less than the practice of the Constitution. In every species of Government, for he would put absolute monarchy out of the question, as one which ought never to take place in any country, democracy and aristocracy were always in a state of gradual improvement, when experience came to the aid of theory and speculation.—In all these, the voice of the People, when deliberately and generally collected, was invariably sure to succeed.—There were moments of periodical impulse and delusion, in which they should not be gratified; but when the views of a People had been formed and determined on the attainment of any object, they must ultimately succeed. On this subject the People of this country had petitioned from time to time, and their applications were made to their Parliament. For every reason therefore, they should be gratified, lest they may be inclined to sue for redress in another quarter, where their application would have every probability of success, from the experience of last year. Failing in their Representatives, they might have recourse to the Prerogative. It had been urged that now, while this business was in agitation, the People of Birmingham and Manchester had not petitioned

petitioned to be represented. This was an argument which at this time, of all others, could have but little weight; for while they were alarmed for their trade, and their subsistence, it was no time for them to set about making improvements in that Constitution in which they were not certain how long they might have any share. On the eve of emigration, they were to look for this in another country, to which their property and business were soon to be transferred. The different parts of this Plan would certainly, in a Committee, be submitted to modification and amendment; but as it now stood, admitting only the first principle, every other part, and the means taken to attain the principle, were highly objectionable. He should not hesitate to declare that he would never agree to admit the purchasing from a majority of Electors the property of the whole. In this he saw so much injustice, and so much repugnance to the true spirit of our Constitution, that he could not entertain the idea for one moment. On the other hand, when the property of a Borough was in one man, there was no chance of his disposing of it, on the terms this day mentioned. For when a particular sum is laid down for a certain purchaser, and interest suffered to accumulate on that sum, the man must be a fool who could be in haste to get the possession of it. There was something injurious in holding out pecuniary temptations to an Englishman to relinquish his franchise on the one hand, and a political principle which equally forbid it on another. He was uniformly of an opinion, which though not a popular one, he was ready to aver, that the right of governing was not property, but a trust; and that whatever was given for Constitutional purposes, should be resumed, when those purposes should no longer be carried into effect. There were instances of gentlemen offering to sacrifice the interest they may have in Boroughs, to the public good. It was strange that none of them now came forward, when the occasion has presented itself. He was averse to the idea of confining parliamentary situations to men of large fortunes, or those who had distinguished themselves in public professions. Should this be the case, there was scarcely any man so little acquainted with the History of Parliament, as not to know, that the House would lose half its force.—It was not from men of large and easy fortunes, that attention, vigilance, energy and enterprise, were to be expected.—Human nature is too fond of gratification not to be somewhat attentive to it when the means are at hand; and the best and most meritorious public services have always been performed by persons in circumstances removed from opulence. The Right Honourable Gentleman need not be ashamed to take some of those Regulations formed in the time of the Protector Oliver Cromwell.—For though a character too odious ever to be the object of praise or imitation, his institutions, confirmed afterwards by his successor Charles II. bear strong marks of genius and ability; for his political disposition was as good as that of his successor, and his genius infinitely more powerful. He concluded with earnestly entreating all sides of the House to concur in the question now before them. He was sorry the Honourable Gentleman who spoke before him did not in all the warmth he professed

professed on the occasion, take the most conciliatory mode of acquiring strength to it. Instead of reproaching the Noble Lord (North) for confining himself to old arguments and observations, he should rather tremble for the success with which these old observations had been applied by his Noble Friend, and the contrary fate which had before attended the novel and more variable stile of the Minister.

Mr. Dundas said, he was sorry that Gentlemen had introduced into the debate so much extraneous matter, as not only to divert the minds of the House from the question, but also tended to alienate the friends of the motion from one another. He was a friend to the Propositions of his Right Honourable Friend, and he begged that the House would not consider this as either a new or a strange declaration; for to the necessity and propriety of an explicit Plan of Reform, he always was friendly; he had objected only to those general and unexplained schemes under which the House was to be converted into a project-shop—and they were to hold Committees of consultation on the diseases of the Constitution. Against such dark ideas he had always set himself; but to the present plan, which was a single and complete act, which went not only to an immediate, but to a constant Reform of the Representation, which would not only cure the present, but the radical defects in the fabric of Representation, he was inclined to give his most hearty support; and he repeated his declaration, that he was sorry that any thing had been introduced into the debate so totally abstracted from the business as the question of the American war. The American war was the war of the People; and on that occasion it was not the construction of the Parliament which gave it rise, but the general feeling of the People, and which was declared through their Representatives. It was not the Noble Lord in the blue ribband who was the author of that war; he did no more than execute the ideas of the People; and in his mind, if he was blameable in any thing, it was for executing those ideas with less ardour than they were expressed.

He said the present Propositions were free from all the objections which had lain against the former Plans. The sacred inheritance of property was not to be violated, and men were not to be outraged by peremptory conditions. No man or set of men were to be forced to enter into the scheme, unless they approved of the conditions; and yet such were the conditions, that he had no doubt but they would be soon accepted.

Mr. Burke, after entertaining the House for a considerable time on the Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Dundas's) conversion from the principles of anti-reformation, proceeded to discuss the merits of the present question, as well as the manner of bringing it in. It offered one alternative, either to adopt this limited, confined plan of Reform, or be perhaps liable to receive one from the Duke of Richmond, on a more enlarged scale. Between the Minister and the



House of Commons, there was the same species of conduct, as if a robber should enter the house of a man, and say, Let me take away such things as I please, and I will lock the door, and keep out any other thieves; but if you refuse the offer, then take your chance of losing all. The doctrine which had gained so much ground, and in conformity to which this plan had now been introduced, was that of Universal Representation. But this measure was only an illusion, from which no solid benefit would ever result. The influence of the country gentlemen in Parliament was always known to preponderate, when they were united in opinion. The respectability which attended a man of landed property, called him for the most part into the situation, which was in itself disagreeable, and rather a situation of duty and constraint than an object of ambition. These circumstances added so much to the importance of their Members, that the advocates of every measure were glad to boast of them as their supporters. Where then was the prudence of throwing into that scale, in whose power the balance already was, that share of power which was pretended to be the means of keeping all parts of the House on the same level? He took a very extensive view of the present state of Representation; and asked if the proprietors of Boroughs had not been already sufficiently paid in the profusion of the honours of this country, without now opening the purse of the nation.

Lord *Frederick Campbell* delivered an eulogy on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but declared he could by no means consent to countenance any alteration of the Constitution. The door once opened for innovation and experiment, the wisest among them could not say where it would end. His Lordship said, that while we had the happiness to enjoy an Administration of such virtue and integrity as the present, he hardly could perceive the necessity of any reform.

Mr. *Rolle* was also decisively against the motion. If it was suffered to pass that House, there was no security for its being thrown out in the other House; for how could he tell but a new Lord, or a new set, might be made on purpose to carry it, if it went up there? There were, Mr. *Rolle* said, some persons sitting in a certain place, who had no more right to sit in that House than his groom.

The *Attorney General* very ably supported the motion, entering into a recapitulation of several of Mr. Pitt's arguments, and answering several things that had been said on the other side the question. Mr. *Attorney*, in the course of his speech, said, there might be persons impudent and indecent enough to declare, that he had no more right to sit in that House than their groom.

Mr. *Bankes* paid very high compliments to his Right Honourable Friend; but said, he could not accede to the motion. Had it been a motion for a Committee, he would have voted for it, as he had regularly voted for the other questions. Mr. *Bankes* by no means approved of purchasing the Boroughs with the public money.

The

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* closed the debate in a few words, in reply to what had fallen from Mr. *Bankes*, as Mr. *Bankes's* objection had been singly started. Mr. *Pitt* dwelt considerably on the mortification he felt at having the misfortune of any thing which he proposed being disapproved by one, for whose character, independent of the claims of a long and intimate friendship, he had so high and just a veneration. He named the points in his proposed Bill, in which it was unexceptionable; and he also mentioned those which he thought could be altered, without changing the spirit of the measure. The House having, long before that, expressed a strong desire to see the debate concluded, Mr. *Pitt* touched but slightly on several particulars, which he affirmed to be deserving of the most attentive consideration.

At about a Quarter before FOUR in the Morning, the House divided on the question,

Ayes (for bringing in the Bill,) - - -	174
Noes (against it) . . . . .	248

Majority against the Reform - 74  
 Tellers for the Ayes, the Hon. John Eliot, and Robert Smith, Esq.  
 Tellers for the Noes, the Right Honourable William Eden, and the Honourable G. A. North.

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