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DEBATE ON THE

REFORM IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

House of Commons, Murch 1, 1831.

Lord John Russel rose, for the purpose of bringing forward his promised motion jesty's Cabinet upon it.

country. What, said the other party? settled institutions of the country. We

some; but placing ourselves between the two, and taking what I hope to be a firm we wish to amend, and the perversions which we hope to avert.

It is not necessary certainly on this occasion, I should go over the grounds which have so frequently been gone over in stating the arguments in Parliament; but I of this House, as it now exists, is not a representation fitting the country at this crisis. I need not go into the changes & alterations which have taken place in the that these places sent no representatives to Parliament. But I will not stop here: they would be still more astonished were they taken to a great and epulent town-I may mention its name. Liverpool-and be told that the manner in which gen-

tion be one of right, or of reason, in both

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 1831.

my opinion rightly-that it would not be if they did, it was only a manifest incon- ty, send those members to Parliamen sufficient to grant a passive and insuffi- venience to those who took part in the whom it would be most desirable to have. cient reform by lopping off some few public business. Some members buty With regard to the Welsh boroughs, the of Reform. I have, said he, formerly straggling branches. His Majesty's Min- came down to vote away the public money. only alternative that was intended to be pear the deliberate measure of an unan- measure will do-they are as convinced bers each-that twenty other towns, not and Cardigan, which boroughs are only mous Cabinet, in redemption of a pledge that any faltering in their course would represented, shall send one member each. to return one member to Parliament. given by his Majesty to Parliament and be calculated not to give that which it is To the metropolis and parts adjacent, we their intentions to the House upon a sub- tion to the country. The grievances of individuals in these districts unreprewhich is felt by millions out of this House, expense of elections. - With regard to members. To the district of Holborn shall send two members. To the district of Holborn shall send two members. To the district of Holborn shall send two members. who look with hope-who look with ex- nominations, Sir, I admit that it may be we intend to give two members. To and Aberdeen, Paisley, Dandee, and ed by the noble lord who is at the present an extensive right of suffrage; and 2ndty the water, we give another two members. time at the head of the government-he where the place is large, with a dense By these means, we make four divisions communicated it to his colleagues-it was population, and the right of suffrage very of the metropolis, and its suburbs, to each place of Aberdeen, and Falkirk of Lacommunicated to me, and I have ever limited. Gatton, Sir. furnishes an ex- of which we give two members. I am since been consulting, either severally or ample of the first kind, and isath of the sure, that, when the wealth and populacollectively, with the members of his Ma- second. In Gatton, Sir, I believe the tion of the parish of Marylebone is conright of suffrage is extended enough-it sidered, it will not be thought that we Much cavil has been raised upon an ex- is extended to all householders paying are going too far, if I say that parish is pression of the noble lord whom I have scot and lot, but then the population as fully entitled to send two members to alluded to, that he would endeavor to consists only of five persons to exercise Parliament as the borough of Boroughframe such a measure as must satisfy the the right. With Bath the case is differ bridge. We therefore propose that Ma public mind, without at the same time en- ent : there the town is large and the rylebone shall send two members. Our dangering the settled institutions of the population numerous, and I do not mean next object, Sir, is to enable larger councountry. Do you mean, says one party, to say that the population has not a right ties to send more representatives. I can-by the settled institutions of the country, to send members to Parliament, and I not think there will be the least objecthe close and rotten boroughs? I think have never heard any persons say that tion to this proposition; for this is a plan we will show in the course of the expla- they thought such a town as Bath ought to of Reform that was proposed in the day nation we are about to make, it is not the be deprived of that right; but then, the of Earl Chatham, and has been advocated close and rotten boroughs which were in- right of suffrage is so limited, that the ever since. Nothing could be more fair tended by the settled institutions of the election is managed by a few, and the than that large counties, in which there How can you pretend to settle and quiet voice at all. To both these evils it is such as Staffordshire and others, should the public mind, without endangering the essential that we should apply remedies have additional members. We therefore are of the reverse opinion; because in at- dealt with in a different way. With re- members. The county of York is divi tempting to quiet the public mind, it is gard to those boroughs which are utterly ded into three ridings, and sends four not necessary that we should bring into decayed, in which there are no individ- embers. We intend to give two memdanger the settled institutions of the coun- uals to exercise the franchise, it would bers to the other riding, making in the try. We wish to place ourselves between be a farce to take away the right which whole six. the two hostile parties; neither agreeing is now exercised by any individual, in I now, Sir, proceed to another part of with the bigoted on the one hand, that no order to give it to the hundred; the my measure. It is to prevent the great reform is necessary, nor agreeing with the only remedy that can be applied in cases expense at elections where the poll is fanaticism of others, that only some par- of this kind, is to deprive such places of protracted. We propose the taking of ticular kind of reform can by any means the right of nomination altogether. I am the poll in different parts of the county, be satisfactory to the people, or whole- perfectly aware, that in making this pro- and that all electors, either for counties position, we are proposing a bold and de- or towns, shall be registered. The macided measure. We have decided to make chinery of this plan will be very simple, and steadfast ground between the abuse this a public remedy, founded on the at the same time very necessary, in order population return of 1821; and we pro- to obtain the names of voters. At a cer pose that every borough which was under tain period of the year, the churchwar-2000 inhabitants in 1821, shall lose the dens and overseers of the parish will be certainly think it due to the House that I take 47 boroughs under 4000 inhabitants, these to an officer to be appointed, who should state shortly the principal grounds and we deprive them of the right of send- will hear all objections and adjudge. on which reformers rest their claims. Sir, ing more than one member. We like- When this is gone through, on the 1st of there can be no doubt the representation wise propose that Weymouth, which now December in every year, the list will be sends four members to this house, shall published, and every person whose name franchised will be those who now send without being asked any other question representation of latter years. It is suf- sending more than one member each; tity. This list will be accessible to all. I ficient for me to say, that it is not a real 166 members, with, I again repeat, two think this regulation will save much exrepresentation. And I have no hesitation from Weymouth, making a total of 168, pense and time in deciding on disputed in saying, that it will be impossible that the flouse, as it at present exists, can stand. I think, if the reformers of ancient days were now in existence, and were to see that a green mound, or a broken wall, sent two members to Parliament, is the wall, sent two members to Parliament, is the saying that it will be impossible that the deciding on disputed which we intend to alter. We do not intend to alter the remaining boroughs, but we intend to alter the elective franciscus and time in deciding on disputed which we propose to remaining the struggle to a successful termination. The was derived from the which we intend to alter. We do not intend to alter the remaining boroughs, the duration of polls. We therefore intend that booths shall be or at a future to be brought in by some of the People. He though to the resentation of the People. He though that the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the medy is to shorten the duration of polls. We therefore intend that booths shall be or at a future to be brought to be the representation of the People. He though that the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the medy is to shorten the duration of the People. He though that the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the medy is to shorten the duration of polls. We therefore intend that booths shall be or at a future to be brought to the People that the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the but we intend to alter the elective franction. From which will be the representation of the People. He though the the continent was shaken by convulsions, the with the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the with the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the beautiful to the People that the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the with the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the with the Continent was shaken by convulsions, the cleave it to be brought to be the representation. The continent was shaken by convulsions, the cleave it to be brought to be the cleave in ken wall, sent two members to Parliament, them are in the nomination of individuals. We consider the machinery of our plan they would be greatly astonished. They This we intend to provide against, and so simple, that in all towns the polls may would be still more astonished, were they to give the franchise to persons possess- be taken in one day. But, considering that members of this country—the subvert every principle of constitutional influto go into the northern part of this couning interest and property in those bothe disturbance that exists during conof perpetual canvess with the opinions of their ence, to place all power in the hands of the peotry, and see flourishing towns containing ing interest and property in those do tested elections, we propose to extend it to two days, or, if necessary, to four.—

great body of the inhabitants have no is an immense manufacturing poulation, -but at the same time, each must be propose, in several counties to add two

privilege of sending members to Parlia-|compelled to produce a list of all those ment. This will utterly disfranchise 60 occupying houses of 10 pounds a year .boroughs. We do not stop here; we They will be obliged to make a return of send but two. The boroughs totally dis-lis on the list will have a right to vote, 119 members; 47 will be deprived of than what is necessary to prove his identhose who pay rent of £10 per annum, Every one knows the enormous expense whether they occupy such premises or at present incurred of bringing up voters of this great Empire, with that confidence which and doubted whether at any period of history ing, whether the noble lord intended to distribute the population had been taken as the basis. In early chise the voters paying scot and lot in boroughs otherwise.—This plan will be carried in- to the poll. In Yorkshire, for instance, to effect under certain conditions to be it could not be done for a less expense thereafter enumerated. We do not intend than from a hundred to a hundred and than from a hundred to a hundred and than from a hundred and than from a hundred to a hundred and than from a hundred and than hereafter enumerated. We do not intend than from a hundred to a hundred and on whatever is made in this bill—that is a ques- a market town, it never was considered, what the measure was to take effect at the expiration to deprive the present resident electors fifty thousand pounds. In Devonshire, tion which has obtained of late many advocates ever the amount of its population. He next ob

instances it would be favorable to reform. What, Sir, is the case as it now stands? The people call loudly for Reform, saying whatever good existed in the Constinuity of the value of £10 a year for Members of a county, as also to all householders.

In the case as it now stands? The people call loudly for Reform, saying whatever good existed in the Constinuity of the value of £10 a year for Members of a county, as also to all householders.

In the case as it now stands? It shall be so arranged, that the pointed to adjourn the decision till the pointed to adjourn th to have representatives, when such places and all leaseholders of 20 years, where we propose to give two more members, as Gatton and Old Sarum have, it is im- the property is worth £50 per annum, there shall be two divisions. It is propossible to say that the representation is are to have the privilege of voting at posed, that in all those towns to be named create an irresponsible power, no man can doubt, at all times possessed. The honorable Baronce for the long and properly carried on. And unpresentatives, the confidence which once expedient to disfranchise 168 seats. But him to vote for the town will not enable stituents is wholly lost. Sir, I end this of members is inconveniently large. Any proper representatives chosen by themargument by saying, if the case be one of member who recollects this House, be- selves, they will not interfere with the right, it is in favor of reform-if it be a fore the union with Ireland, at which time county representatives, and the two class. pediency loudly calls for it. Sir, I shall business was conducted before that time, forty shilling freeholders, no alteration now proceed to the more difficult part of will also recollect how much more readi- is intended to be made with respect to Sir, those Ministers have felt-and in knew that many did not attend at all, or they do, by the smallness of their proper-

> said, but in a stronger manner, with reber. Peterhead will, however, tale the nark. The qualification will, Sir, be the occupation of a house £10 a year, registered in a similar manner as in England.

We also propose, that the same right

to vote shall be extended to Ireland, as

egards the value of property amounting

a borough, sending members to Parliament. I now come to the result of the measure in regard to the number of memthe number to be disfranchised is 168.mer, and there will remain 490. There will then be added 5 for cotland, 3 for Ireland, 1 for Wales, 8 for London, 34 for the large towns, and 55 for the English counties-making in all 106. The 106 being added to the 490, will make the number 596. Now, take 596 from 658, people to support any future burthens, and to and there will remain 62. The decrease of the number returned to this House will consequently be 62. I will not state, it sons who I imagine will be entitled to long continued cheering.) vote by this bill for the different boroughs, towns, and counties. I suppose that, for the towns at present represented, there will be about 110,000; for the new towns and 60,000; and Ireland, perhaps 40,000. ting before; and, upon the whole, I cal- vidual, whether in or out of office. The noble bers for the House of Commons in the hands culate that the number which will be add- Lord had told them that he was supported by try. - Persons having in themselves a valuable stake in the country, interested in ment, and to support the throne in carryconstituents, and therefore unable to advise, de-liberate, and decide upon the great questions of England but the shadow and the name. The conclusion of his speech, freedom which should prevail in the Legislature the principle on which members were elected, but Sir R. Peel begged to ask, before adjourn-

to be in the community any class of persons they should still allow the Crown to exercise wholly irresponsible—and that the ballot does that influence to a certain extent which it has I come now, Sir, to the representation corruption in which that influence has thriven,

tricts of burghs, each to return one mem- the gentlemen of En land is, that in a great crisis of the country, they have never been found in a war against the natural enemy, they were these propositions, how ver they may be met by it would do nothing. to £10 a year ; that that shall give to ev- this flouse, the King's Ministers will find that other. They think of Reform, that it is the on grounds of complaint were these; the nomi struggle with any future difficulties they may seek it are united heart and hand with them. selves, and they look only, like themselves, to is only a rough guess, the number of per the glory and welfare of England. - Immense and

S.r R. Inglis said, the noble Lord had to It certainly was the first time that a member, not 50,000; for London 95,000; for Scot- a Minister, but who nevertheless, shone with the reflected light of the Administration, came half a million of persons, be it observed, assertion always made, when measures of reconnected with the property of the coun form were brought forward. In many periods which might be brought before them, with that bonorable Baronet then descauted at length on Mr. Hune rose amidst loud ence of "adjourn:" be told that the manner in which general support—I mean the question of their right to vote, but experience has a system of popular election. If he were taken there, sir, he would see briber to the greatest extent. He would see briber manifest and manifold evils, that we are then paid—openly paid—for their votes; and he would be astonished that a nation whose representatives were so chosen, thus the support—in the handle to deprive the present resident elections. In Devonshire, tion which has obtained of fate many advocates where the many advocates where the right to vote, but experience has where there conducted, was of their right to vote, but experience has a system of popular election. If he would see briber the present resident elections were there conducted, was of their right to vote, but experience has where the voters were obliged to be contained many advocates where the voters were so doubt mean the present election. If he below the present a system of popular elections and much toge several the whole sit to manifest and manifold evils, that we are different ball to the their votes and he would be astonished that a nation where the voters were obliged to be contained to be contained. There is no doubt mere as flow where the voters were obliged to be contained to be contained. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. There is no doubt mere as flow in the ballot. The functions of legislation. Sir, if the queslife. I have said, that all those occupy day; but if any dispute arises about fords a cover to much fraud and much crime; He did not blame the England Ministers proposed to adopt.

was placed in it by the people, is com- All leaseholders of 21 years, which have distance shall be so contrived that there mons in the face of day, would ever resort to volution, and which in fact it had never given pletely gone. I will say, that if such not been renewed within two years, are shall not be more than fifteen polling pla. concealment in the exercise of their most importing, though it had suffered it to become a dead towns as Leeds and Manchester are not to have the privilege of voting in towns, ces in a county. In the counties to which tant privilege. I am bound, sir, moreover, to letter by never in any instance attempting to essay, that it appears doubtful whether there ought ercise it; unless they were prepared to do this, less such places are allowed to have representatives, the confidence which once
existed between this House and those whom honorable members call their con- again. It is our opinion, that the number that where the towns have their votes for to see any irresponsible power confided in the he felt assured, could get up and state that a hands of any one man, or of any body of men, bribe had of resent years been given to any bo-knowing, as I do, that a man is a being whose norable member, to vote for ov against a meamind is clouded by a variety of errors, and inflit- sure, although it had formerly been done -- and question of reason, it is in favor of reform a hundred members were added (which I es of voters will be kept as distinct as I shall perhaps be told, sir, that the eff ct of of Commons. If, then, the House was gradualif it be a question of expediency-ex- will not say was a great evil,) and how possible. With regard to the right of the this measure will be to destroy the influence and by becoming more and more free from the undue power of the aristocracy; but that, sir, I deny, influence of the Crown and the Aristocracy, and On the contrary, I maintain that the influence of the People, as of the aristocracy will be much improved. I concelled to them in the ordinary mode, was my subject, namely, an explanation of ly it was done. It was well known, that them, it being considered that that class mean that aristocracy which mingles with the continually increasing, what necessity was there the measures which representing the Mi- many members obtained a seat in that of voters are eminently fitted to be en- people, which knows their wants, which receives for the noble Lord to introduce a measure such nisters of the Crown, I am now about to House from motives entirely of ambition trusted with the elective franchise, his their neighbors hospitality, and which mixes as that which was then before the House and the honor it conferred. Every one Majesty's Government considering that nature that such an aristocracy must not have which were most sensibly felt in that Housegreat influence in the election of members dee to namely Petition and the Press. By means of the ed worthy to serve their country. Such an press, the members of that House were subjectaristocracy will always have such an influence ed to the control of the people with the quick-as every good man will say they ought to lave; uess of lightning, and their conduct was canvasbut if gentlemen mean to say that it will destroy sed wherever the English language was known. ie influence of an aristocracy which does not He felt confi lent that the measure had so chance brought this question before the House on isters are satisfied that it is not sufficient We therefore propose to make a reduction, made was, the adding of certain towns to live among the people, which knows nothing of of success. No man, who knew what the bless my own responsibility; but the measure to stop here, or to lop off a branch of the and for the people, and cares nothing for the people; lings of a Constitutional Monarchy had hitherto I now bring forward is not mine, but a franchise where direct bribery has been cut off several. That several large towns, Parliament, and the creating of a new which seeks rank without ment, which seeks rank without ment, which seeks rank without nevit, and for pensions with a new proved; they are convinced that no half now unrepresented, shall send two memsympathy. The sooner the influence of that species of aristocracy is carried away, with the The honorable Baronet said, he would conclude his observations with the words which the House to the Country. It is therefore, with their wish to give, stability to the throne, propose to give eight additional members, of Scotland; and, certainly, if England the better for had addressed to the Throne at the commencegreat anxiety, that I venture to explain strength to the Parliament, or satisfac- as there are now nine hundred thousand wants reform, the same thing must be every wholesome and invigorating influence." ment of the present session - That we, with The question is, whether, without some large all his Majesty's People, do justly appreciate ject, the interest of which is known by which the people complain, Sir, are, first sented. To the Tower Hamlets, con- ference to that country, with the countenance and with ment under which, through the power of Divine the crowded audience that is assembled nominations by individuals: 2ndly, elec- taining a population of two bundred and then, that 22 country be support of the people. Sir, I believe we Providence, this country has enjoyed, for a long here, but still more by the deep anxiety tions by close corporations, and 3dly, the eighty thousand, we propose to give two member. but there is no question whatever but that your borty-of all that constitutes social happiness, pectation to the result of this day's de- exercised in one of two ways, first, where Finsbury and its district, to give two Leith, one member. With the exception must perish. Sir, I now appeal, in my turn, to the world." He would not change these advanliberations. The measure itself was form- there are but few or no inhabitants, and members. To Lambeth and parts beyond of one, we do not propose to alter the dis the aristocracy of England. My opinion, sir, of tages for any of so speculative and specious a

Similar to England, being property in burthens were to be supported, they were ever People. This measure would not let in any their fellow subjects; and I ask to mnow, when of shopkeepers and country atomeys. The a great sacrifice is to be made which will show leader of the country club would now be the With these alterations, fifty members, in- their generosity, which will evince their public man of importance in his district, and his interstead of forty-five, will be returned for spirit, which will identify them for the future ests and influence would be represented instead with the people around them, to come forward of those important interests now let in. The in such circumstances, to give to the Throne plan would not save expenses at elections, and s'ability, to the Parliament strength, to the Coun- it would not satisfy the radicals, while, for the try peace. Sir, whatever may be the result of promotion of the great interests of the country

ery person a right to vote who resides in they have done their duty. They have hitherto, the hon, and learned gentleman that great misfearing the disapprobation and the frown of an- as would remove all causes for discontent. The bers altogether. The number now is 658; ly measure that is calculated to insure permation boroughs, and the great expense of elect been the admiration of foreign parts, on account ceed in convincing the People that it was a benpular spirit, you show that you are determined that it was by means of nomination boroughs not to be the representatives of small classes, of that men of ability first obtained seats in Parlia particular interests-but that you will form a ment. He admitted that to a certain extent, body, which representing the people, which they were advantageous; but he contended the springing from the people, which having a sym, the disadvantages of the system far counterbalpathy with the people, can fairly call upon the anced the advantages. The system of nominaly interfere with the good government of the more than counterbalanced the advantages of the system which the honorable and learned

of this country, though approving of a mixed In counties, I imagine that 100,000 at down to stigmatise that House as not represent- olution, his Majesty's Ministers and thought it least will be entitled to vote under this such a charge, accompanied by such a threat, ing satisfied that the House might safely enterbill, who never had the advantage of vo- has ever been made in Parliament, by any indi- tain it, as it would place the election of memed to the constituency of the Commons, the people, but he would deny the fact that the the middle classes of this or any other country. House of Parliament will certainly be same argument had been always used, the same which they lived, whatever the state of representations. of our history, applications had been made for popular theorists, who thought that the House view from various parts of the empire, though tation of the People. That was the Constitupreserving the property of the country, not, perhaps, so numerously signed as on the tion of the country. Honorable gentlemen might and upon whom will depend any future present occasion; still they were sufficiently go back and find periods in barbarous times, structure this country may have to sustain numerous to induce able and enlightened men when outrages were committed by the Crown to support this House, to support Parliaed accordingly. The source of the excitement | ways been held to be constitutional doctrine. it was easy to trace. It was derived from the that the House of Communis ought to be the repshould have a proper control over their repre- leved it to be, still he would resist the propo- fluence, not of the Ansiecracy, or the Crown, sentatives. I yet think that it would be inexpe- sal of meeting it by such a measure as the pre- but under that of the great body of intelligent large majority of the People coming under that

of the lives of the voters now living