

Mr. GREELY moved that Bill No. 91, relating to the Gananque Water Power Company, be re committed to Committee of the Whole for amendment.

The house went into Committee—Mr. Pardee in the chair. The amendment proposed was in the 16th and 17th sections of the Bill. The amendments were reported, adopted, and on motion of Mr. Greely, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

GOLD AND SILVER MINES.

Hon. Mr. RICHARDS moved the second reading of Bill No. 117, relating to gold and silver mines. In doing so he referred to the principal provisions of the Bill, stating that the Bill of 1864 was chiefly confined to gold mines. It was not then supposed that there were silver mines; but the discoveries on the north shore of Lake Superior showed that there was a large amount of wealth there. The Government found it necessary to make some provision for the gold mining regions of the county of Hastings. The Act of 1864, instead of a royalty, imposed a fee, under which parties were allowed to work gold mines. This had been practically a failure. They now proposed to substitute a miner's license and royalty. The Act also applied to both gold and silver mines. Regarding the question of royalty, he was aware there was a difference of opinion—some holding that mineral lands should be put on the same footing as agricultural lands. He held, however, that there were material differences. When they gave grants of agricultural land they expected permanent benefit to the country, but with regard to mineral lands no such advantages were looked for. They had fixed 3 per cent.—or 5 cents an ounce—as the lowest standard. That was the same as fixed in Nova Scotia. It was also the intention of the Government, if the gold-bearing section proved richer the Government would feel justified in doubling the amount of royalty in the section. With regard to the minerals on the north shore, the probabilities are that the mines would be very productive. The Government did not, however, ask to go higher than ten per cent., and would fix the royalty at from three to ten per cent. In some countries an export duty is paid upon gold, and he saw no good reason why the Government of this country should give up its right. In regard to the mode of working, he stated that two classes of persons were likely to be engaged in the work. These were the miner and the capitalist. The latter class would purchase considerable tracts of territory, and would be able to invest funds which the poor miner had not in his possession. They proposed to divide the territory and allow privileges to both classes. They proposed to give the miners a miner's lease to allow them to prospect and have the right to work anything he found in the claim. With regard to quartz, they proposed that no person shall be allowed to crush quartz without taking out a license. The Bill, he admitted, was not a perfect one, and only intended to tide over till next session; and during next session a new Bill would be introduced which he hoped would be more perfect from the experience obtained in the working of these laws. If he was in the Government at that time he promised to introduce something more adapted to the country.

Mr. McKELLAR fully agreed with the Commissioner of Crown Lands as to the importance of the Bill, and was very much surprised that the Government brought down such a Bill on the very last day of the session. They only had it in their hands about an hour or two, and yet they were asked to pass it. He was alive to the necessity of dealing with the mineral lands, because it was one of the largest interests the Government had to deal with; yet he thought the Government should have taken up the matter at an earlier stage in the session, or should have tided it over till next session, without asking the house to adopt it. He was not prepared for the passage of the Bill. It might be good or imperfect; but in dealing with so large and important a question, he thought the Government and the house should more fully consider what they were doing. Besides the Commissioner admitted that the Bill was not a perfect one. Under all the circumstances he thought that during the next few months the Government might deal with these mineral lands in the same way as in the past. He had looked at some of the clauses and thought them very objectionable. The Commissioner proposed to levy from three to ten per cent. But suppose the miner made nothing—what then? They had all along been told, in reference to all matters before the house, that having only one chamber, it was important that there should be full discussion on all subjects. He hoped then that the Commissioner had only brought this down in order that an expression of opinion might be had upon it.