

LEGISLATURE OF ONTARIO.

Second Parliament—First Session

MONDAY, 18th Dec.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 3 20 o'clock.

PETITIONS.

Several petitions were presented.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD presented the public accounts of the current year.

MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY.

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD presented a message from His Excellency, which was read by the Speaker as follows:—

“Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislature:—

“I thank you for your dutiful and loyal address, and for the assurances that the important subjects submitted to you will receive your best attention.

“With reference to that portion of the answer to the speech which expressed the disapproval by the Legislative Assembly of the large powers given to the Executive under the Act passed by the last Legislature appropriating a million and a half of dollars in aid of railways, and in which I am informed that the House have no confidence in a Ministry which is attempting to carry out in reference to the control of that appropriation a usurpation fraught with danger to political liberty and constitutional Government, I have to observe that no action has been taken by my advisers in regard to the disposition of any portion of the said fund except in accordance with the power invested in them by the Act referred to, and that I will give every constitutional consideration to any Bill that may be presented to me.

(Signed). “W. P. HOWLAND.”

Mr. BLAKE said the address implying want of confidence in the House had been sent up to His Excellency by a majority of 64 to 6. Under the advice of the remains of a Government His Excellency has been pleased to reply that no action had been taken with respect to the railway aid policy except so far as authorised by preceding legislation. But that was not the question implied in the vote which had been taken. It would be necessary for the House to take a still more decided step. He believed it had been the wish of the House that the Government should resign the position for which it had voted them incompetent. Yet this gracious message took no notice of this decision. The Opposition were, he claimed, defending the constitution against the attacks made upon it. He appealed to those gentlemen who had given their votes conditionally to decide whether they would follow the Government still further. He called upon every man who valued the independence of that House not to strain or violate the constitution. He believed that the wish of the vast majority of that House was that the Government should resign, and he therefore moved the following motion:—

“That an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor, representing that this House has received His Excellency's gracious reply to the Address this House adopted on Friday last.

“That this House was invited by His Excellency's Ministers to consider the gracious speech of His Excellency delivered at the opening of the Session and to proceed with the work of the Assembly, notwithstanding that some of the constituencies were unrepresented.

“That this House was thus declared to be, as it in fact was and is, competent in its present state to deal with all questions which might be brought before it.

“That the discussion of the proposed address in reply to His Excellency's gra-

...the question of the approval or consideration of the policy of Ministers, and they themselves in the course of the debate challenged an expression of the feeling of the House towards them.

“That Ministers have been defeated in each of the four divisions which have taken place, and have never had control of the House.

“That the Ministerial policy on a most important question has been condemned and reversed by a decisive vote of this House, which has declared its want of confidence in Ministers.

“That the Provincial Treasurer has, in consequence of the hostile attitude of the House, resigned his office.

“That the continuance in office of the remaining Ministers is, under existing circumstances, at variance with the spirit of the constitution.

“That the supplies voted by this House will lapse on the 31st day of December instant, and this House would be wanting in its duty if it should not, before that time, (as was done under like circumstances last year) make provision for the expenditure under Ministers possessing its confidence of the monies necessary to carry on the public service until the final estimates for the ensuing year can be voted.

“That this House regrets that the remaining Ministers should have advised His Excellency to continue them in office, and humbly prays that His Excellency will be graciously pleased to consider the representation contained in this address.”

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD said that he knew the resolutions just placed in the hands of the Speaker had been fully considered by gentlemen opposite and elaborately got up to meet the reply which they expected from His Excellency. They had correctly judged that the members of the Administration would feel bound to maintain their places until a full expression had been given to the voice of the country through all its representatives. The parliamentary practice was that the Government of the day should consider whether the exigencies of the condition in which they were placed and the duty which they owed to the country, to their followers and to themselves, should induce them to vacate their seats when there was a probability that their doing so would not in any degree be advancing the material interests of the country. Under the present circumstances, he thought that it would be treacherous and cruel on the part of Ministers to resign at the present moment, even if they had no doubt that it would be probable that the voice of the House would be unchanged. But with the conviction upon their minds that the result of the approaching elections would place a new view upon the strength of the House, he felt it to be his bounden duty to remain until the constituencies now unrepresented should be allowed a voice in the affairs of the country. Hon. gentlemen opposite could not deny that view. The elections had been brought on at a time unfavorable to two-thirds of the Government supporters, and would otherwise have had a very different result. No measure had ever passed Parliament which embraced such stringent regulations in respect to the distribution of money as that which would be found in the Bill appropriating a million and a half for the Bill appropriating a million and a half spoke of usurpation of power, as if this such power had ever been given a precedent before. Why could not they have made objection to the votes for public institutions—or in regard to drainage, for which \$200,000 had been appropriated? Why, because several hon. members in their addresses alluded to this subject adversely, and their votes were sought. No improper use had been made of any funds ever placed in the hands of the Administration. No political capital had been attempted to be made out of the disposal of the railway aid any more than out of the drainage fund, which had almost entirely been expended in constituencies inimical to the Government. It was gratifying to himself and his colleagues to find that the gentlemen opposite, however ready they might be to find fault, could only place their hands upon one act of the Government, and even in that one they had not attempted to prove that any speculation, jobbery or maladministration had been practised by the Government. If hon. gentlemen opposite were consistent in what they said, and if they should ever come over to the Treasury benches, they would have to introduce a scheme on the subject of railways, founded on Mr. Blake's resolutions of last session, which would bring about a most pernicious system of “log-rolling.” (Hear, hear.) He defied any hon. member to show that any of the appropriations formerly made in favor of the Grand Trunk, Northern Railway, or any other appropriation that had been made was surrounded by restrictions upon the Government that the appropriation should be laid before Parliament and its sanction obtained. Hon. members on the other side of the House contented themselves with making personal charges of a most scandalous character. The hon. member for Middlesex had seen fit to charge him and the Government with having coerced an hon. member of the House to resign through the agency of a bank in Montreal, and one of the principal merchants of that city, and he challenged the author of that charge to substantiate or deny it. He (Attorney-General) knew that the hon. gentleman had addressed to him letters not marked private denying him this charge, and it was his duty to rise in this charge, and it was his duty to rise in his place and repudiate any connection with the charge as he (Attorney-General) repudiated the idea that directly or indirectly the retirement of the hon. member for West Northumberland had been brought about by himself or any member of the Government. As he knew the hon. member for Middlesex had

letters in his possession the contents of which he should place before the House unless he wished to remain silent and asperse the character of men as respected as he was, it was due to the country and the House that he should read.

Mr. MACKENZIE said he was not in a position to bring the matter up to-day.

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD said that the hon. gentleman had received letters from Messrs. King and Stephen, and it was only right that he should give them a benefit of their denial. (Cheers.)

Mr. MACKENZIE said that the Hon. Attorney-General had come to him and he had told him that he had those letters in his possession, which he would bring before the House at the earliest possible moment.

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD reiterated his statement and demand.

Mr. MACKENZIE—The hon. member has no authority for the statement he is making. (Applause)

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD—“Why, Mr. Speaker, I have copies of the letters”—(producing them amidst loud cheers.)

Mr. WOOD—“The matter should never have been referred to in the first place.”

Mr. SPEAKER said the Attorney-General had the floor.

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD then proceeded to speak of the usual custom of the House to adjourn previous to the Christmas holidays, and as the time was now only a few days off, and the relative strength of the two sides about the same, his hon. friend the Treasurer being still hale and hearty and prepared to carry out the promise he solemnly made as to the course he should take.

Mr. BLAKE—On this resolution?

ATTY-GEN. MACDONALD said, on the general policy, and he believed the one included the other. He then went on to say that it was not proper that hon. gentlemen should proceed any further, but should rest satisfied with the supposed victory which they had obtained, and that there should be an adjournment till such a time in January as would allow the elections to be over. When the House then met the hon. gentleman opposite would have an opportunity of testing the strength of the House, and discovering whether or not they possessed the control thereof. If the result of that test be as they expected, no man would more gladly resign his place than he would. (Hear, hear.) Between the present time and the time of the proposed meeting, he said that it was not the intention of the Government to take any step involving any amount of money excepting for current expenses, nor to make any appointments. He suggested that it would greatly facilitate the proceedings of the House under whatever Government might be in power if petitions should be received for the next session as for this. If the Government resigned now and the gentleman opposite took the Treasury Benches, the return of the absent members would probably put a new phase on the appearance of the House, and necessitate another appeal to the country. He therefore called on hon. members to support the motion he was about to make, and moved “That all the words after that in the said motion be expunged and the following substituted: That when this House adjourns to-day it do stand adjourned till Tuesday, the 9th January next.” (Cheers.)

Hon. Mr. CURRIE said he pitied the position of the Government. His hon. friend previous to the late election had been supported by a third of that House, but had come back supported by a minority of it, notwithstanding the circumstances under which the elections had been sprung upon the country. Referring to the importance which had been attached by the Government to the absence of certain representatives, he said there was a time when the Government had disregarded the non-representation of a much larger section of the country. The hon. Atty-General had expressed a fear that the system of log-rolling might be introduced into the House, but he (Mr. Currie) thought the hon. gentleman wished to monopolize the log-rolling. The hon. gentleman seemed to complain of the course taken by the Opposition, but the Government had invited a vote of no-confidence, and that having been given it was now time for them to vacate the Treasury benches. The end of the Coalition was in keeping with its commencement, it was hard to bring into being, and it was hard to die. If the hon. gentleman had remained true to the principles of his early political career he would never have become the leader of that Coalition. He (Mr. Currie) would characterize the Coalition as an organised hypocrisy bound together by corruption. (Order.) He did not envy the position of those who held place without power. The hon. gentleman might be the first Minister of the Crown, but the hon. member for South Bruce was the first minister of the people.

Mr. CUMBERLAND said the Opposition claimed to have thrown the Government into a minority, but he utterly denied it. The Opposition had, however, contrived to catch the votes of hon. members who were pledged to the railway aid question. He apprehended that the Ministry was not responsible to the House for the legislation of a previous Session, if that was so it was putting the Ministry in a position which he believed was never intended by the Constitution. To call the vote which had been taken a vote of no-confidence was, in his opinion, a misrepresentation; it was merely an attempt to pass censure on past legislation. Then the hon. gentleman had charged the gentlemen on the Treasury benches with being held together by corruption; if that were so let them bring forward their specific charges, he would challenge them to the proof. Those charges fluently and flippanly made, had also been brought forward by other hon. members opposite, but when asked for proof they had failed to do so. He challenged the hon. member for Welland to substantiate any one of the charges he had brought against the Government.

Mr. H. S. MACDONALD considered things had come to a bad pass for both the House and the country, when they heard from the Opposition such expressions as

those which had called down upon the hon. member the Speaker's reproof. That hon. gentleman appeared to have Grand Trunk on the brain. What were the facts in these cases which had been brought forward? He had proved that the hon. member for Kingston had retrograded from the pledges he had made to his constituents. That hon. gentleman knew that no member could have been returned from Kingston to this House who was not prepared to give the Government a fair and honest support. If the facts as stated to him (Mr. Macdonald) were true as to the pledges which were taken, nothing had occurred to justify the hon. member for Kingston in the course which he had adopted. The Kingston Daily News had contained two letters, one of which was signed by his (Mr. Robinson's) brother, certifying that the statements of the hon. member for Kingston with regard to the Grand Trunk were incorrect, and giving them an unqualified contradiction. The other letter was signed by a Mr. Davidson, a strong supporter of the hon. member, a gentleman who had indeed been a candidate for the representation of Kingston, but had withdrawn in favor of the present member on a certain understanding. The hon. member consulted that gentleman with regard to his address, and they drew it up jointly. The hon. member then promised Mr. Davidson to support the railway policy of the Government, to support the Government in passing the address, and that he would not vote non-confidence in the Government. The hon. member thus obtained the support of Mr. Davidson, and doubtless of many other Conservatives and Reformers approving of the Government policy. In view of the facts, it appeared that the hon. member for Kingston had misapprehended the pledges which he took at the time of his election. If the hon. gentleman had come here and fulfilled those pledges, and had then found that the Government introduced measures which he could not support, he would then have been fully justified in opposing them; but he (Mr. Macdonald) thought the hon. gentleman was wrong and unjustifiable in the course he had taken. It seemed to him that the proposal of the Attorney-General would commend itself to the approval of every honest thinker. He thought that on a grave question like this the 170,000 unrepresented should have a voice; that they should do them justice by agreeing to this adjournment, which would not in any way be injurious to the country. If the vote of non-confidence had been carried by a majority exceeding the number of the vacant seats, it would have clearly been the duty of the Government to resign, but that was not the case. Had one hon. gentleman carried out his pledges the majority of one against the Government would not have been obtained. He thought that the time of the House was too valuable to be wasted over the constant bespattering of praise upon the hon. member for South Bruce by hon. gentlemen opposite, which sounded rather suspicious in view of the fact that they seemed to expect that hon. gentleman would before long be the head of the Government.

Mr. SEXTON said the bottom of the Combination had fallen out. It had been said that the majority on the Opposition side of the House had been gained by a gross misrepresentation, but he was disposed to take a different view. The Government would not, he thought, find themselves in any better position after the elections.

Mr. ROBINSON referred to the charges brought against him by the hon. member for Leamington, and said that he had given the pledges attributed to him.

Dr. CLARKE said that the position taken by the Government with respect to the unrepresented constituencies failed to satisfy his intelligence. He had listened with much regret to the statements made by the hon. Atty-General in the previous debate. The position taken by that hon. gentleman was, he considered, one which had been developed by the course he had adopted during the last four years. Dr. Clarke proceeded to quote Byron in a manner which excited some amusement in the House, and was greeted with the cry of “encore.” Continuing his remarks he claimed that the Government had now been four times defeated, and that there were but two courses before it—either to dissolve the House or to resign. The voice of public opinion had condemned the Coalition Government. He maintained that it was the duty of the House to control the public expenditure in every detail.

Hon. Mr. RICHARDS said the Government had, during the last four years, introduced numerous measures of a most useful character, and he thought that fact entitled them to a certain degree of consideration. Conservatives had been accused of resorting to corrupt practices, but they had assisted in carrying a bill which had enabled the strictest enquiry to be made into controverted elections. The Government had established a more economical system for the administration of justice by abolishing certain courts and transferring their business to the assizes. That alone had taken off a great burden from the people. The public buildings which had been erected under the control of the Government had been avowedly a good return for the money laid out on them. Great reduction had been effected in the administration of the Crown Lands Department, over which he had presided for three and a half years. Considerable economies had in fact been introduced into every department of the Executive. At the close of the preceding Session the Government had found itself with a surplus of three millions and a quarter, and the disposal of which sum was a subject of some embarrassment to them. The Government felt they could not make any disposition of that surplus without taking into consideration the position of the Municipal Loan Fund Debt. But at the time the award between the Provinces was made, the Government felt that they could proceed to appropriate a portion of this money. If the Government had not taken up some settled policy on this question they would have laid themselves open to the censure of the House. The Government assumed that the award was a final award, and on that ground they had proceeded. They could