

much larger amount of work done in the Department during the two former years than during the latter, and the Department was also in a greater state of efficiency.

Mr. BOURGEEBEE hoped that the principle would not be recognized in this House that hon. gentlemen should not scrutinize the small items in the accounts. He contended that the system of expenditure the Government were now pursuing was driving the country into direct taxation—unless they made another large sale of timber limits, and that he believed they dare not do.

Mr. PRINCE said he was prepared to prove that the late Commissioner sold a number of timber licenses at such prices that the buyers were now ready to go down on their knees and beg to be released from their bargains. The present Commissioner refused to release them, and on that ground he (Mr. Prince) was opposed to the Commissioners. The Opposition had contended that the Government had given these lands away, but in reality they had driven very hard bargains.

The motion was then carried, and the House went into Committee, Mr. Hodgins in the chair.

Mr. CAMERON asked how it was the unusual course was being pursued of moving the House into Committee of Supply on the same night on which the estimates were brought down.

Hon. Mr. CROOKS said it was the course pursued last session. He moved the adoption of the item of \$5,880 for Government House, and said this was the only one he wished adopted to-night.

In answer to an enquiry from Mr. Cameron,

Mr. CROOKS explained that owing to his accountant having misunderstood his instructions, the amounts placed in the estimates as those of salaries of officials were only a preliminary draft, and not intended for publication. It was not his intention, nor that of the Government, to suggest any increase.

Mr. CAMERON said that the hon. Commissioner of Public Works had stated out in North Wellington that fuel was purchased by this Government for a much less sum than the late Government obtained it for. If so, he (Mr. Cameron) wished to know how it was that there was so large a sum as \$2,300 appearing in the estimates for fuel this year?

Hon. Mr. CROOKS remarked that all the accounts for last year's coal had not come in yet.

Mr. MCKELLAR said that the advertisements for the coal for 1872 were for the same amount of coal as Mr. Carling bought in 1871, and what he had stated in North Wellington was that the present Government had got the same quantity and same quality of coal as the late Government did, but for a less sum; and that more coal was required for some institutions this winter than last, on account of the difference in the coldness of the weather. More coal was also required in the Government House this winter than last, because a forcing-house had been built and fuel was used in it.

After considerable discussion the item passed, and the Committee rose, reported progress, and asked leave to sit again.

The House then, at 11:20, adjourned.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, Feb. 20.

There was just a quorum present at the Public Accounts Committee this morning.

Mr. BYKERT stated that he had asked for information with regard to the details of the item of revenue \$643,637, for woods and forests, but had not received it.

Mr. RICHARDS considered it was desirable that they should not be left in ignorance as to this important point of revenue.

The CHAIRMAN then gave directions for the information to be obtained immediately, which when brought up showed that \$353,811 65 were ordinary revenue, and that \$289 912 were collected on timber limits and interest on the same. There was a discrepancy in the Public Accounts, and the sum of \$50 had not been put to the credit of woods and forests.

The Committee then went through statement 14 of the Public Accounts, comprising the contingencies, and on most of the items relating to advertising and subscriptions to