

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

FIRST SESSION — THIRD PARLIAMENT.

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 8.

The Speaker took the chair at three o'clock.

PETITIONS.

The following petitions were presented:—

Hon. Mr. Currie—Of the Town Council of St. Catharines, for an Act to amend the Act authorizing them to construct Water-works.

Mr. Deroche—Of the Bishop of Niagara, for an Act to incorporate the Synod of the Diocese of Niagara.

Mr. Creighton—Of the Town Council of Meaford, for an Act to amend their Act of Incorporation.

Mr. Flesher—Of the Township Council of Caledon, for an Act to confirm a certain survey in said township.

Mr. O'Donoghue (two petitions)—Of the Bishop of Ontario, also of the Rev. J. S. Lauder, for an Act to authorize the sale of certain Church property in Ottawa.

Mr. O'Donoghue—Of G. B. Pattie *et al.*, of Ottawa, for an Act to incorporate the Union Fire Insurance Company.

Mr. Vills—Of Margaret Welsh, of Belleville, praying for aid.

MESSAGE FROM HIS HONOUR.

Mr. SPEAKER presented a message from his Honour, acknowledging the Address voted by the House.

THE STANDING COMMITTEES.

Mr. MOWAT moved the adoption of the report of the Select Committee appointed to strike the Standing Committees.

Mr. MACDOUGALL (Simcoe) said he understood that there had been some suggestion to the effect that the Private Bills Committee should be increased in numbers.

Mr. MOWAT said that the hon. member for London had suggested that the name of the hon. member for North Leeds (Mr. Merrick) should be added to that Committee. He was perfectly willing that that should be done, provided that of the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Dawson) was also added.

Mr. MACDOUGALL (Simcoe) said he understood that the hon. member for East Toronto had some suggestions to make with regard to the Public Accounts Committee, but he (Mr. Macdougall) could not take the responsibility of asking for any more delay on account of that hon. gentleman's absence. He believed there was some complaint that the Committee was stronger in one direction than it ought to be, assuming that the transactions of the Government were perfectly fair and square. But if it was found that there was an obstruction existing in the work of the Committee it would be open to those on his side of the House to object in the House at any time, and for his part he was anxious that the work of the various Committees should proceed.

Mr. LAUDER said that the number of members on the Public Accounts Committee had been increased from eleven to seventeen—in other words it had been nearly doubled. He did not know how this increase of members would affect the operations of the Committee, but perhaps it would be found that the Government would not be able through their Treasurer to resist the action of that Committee as they had been able to do last session, by stifling all enquiry, and opposing all action in the direction of enquiry. (Laughter.) The Government members of the Select Committee had not dared to bring in such a report as they had done last session. The Government had been forced to abandon the position they had formerly taken with regard to this matter; they had felt bound to increase the numbers upon the Committee in such a way as to give the Opposition greater proportionate strength than when the Committee had consisted of seven members. The result of the late general election had been to force the Government to do this, and they had had to give way to the warnings of their friends to change their course, and he knew that the feeling of the House was that there should be a full and fair enquiry into matters coming before the Public Accounts Committee. The hon. Treasurer had been driven out of East Toronto by the indignant feeling of the electors with regard to this matter, and he had been forced to go to the pocket borough

of Oxford in order to get a seat alongside the hon. Premier. The Opposition did not wish to divide the House upon the matter, or to urge that the Committee as now constituted of 17 members would be an unfair one, until they had tried it. If, however, they found that the Government intended to pursue the same course this session as last, they would bring the matter up in the House. The leader of the Opposition took the same ground as he did, with regard to the Committee. The Treasurer had said last session that the public paid no attention to the action of the Committee, but the electors of East Toronto had told him a different story. (Laughter.) He (Mr. Lauder) was here to protest, in the name of the constituency which had elected him by a large majority against the action of the Government in that Committee last session. They had not had an audit or an investigation of the accounts of the Province for the past two years, and the action of the Committee had simply amounted to nothing. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The hon. member for South Brant laughed, but he was one who had assisted the Government in preventing a proper investigation. The leader of the Opposition and his friends had at least the satisfaction of knowing that the country had strengthened their hands.

Mr. MOWAT said he defied the hon. gentleman or any of his friends to find a single thing objectionable or improper in the conduct of the Government in reference to the Public Accounts Committee during the past year. The hon. member had said that the Government had been warned by its friends not to pursue the course this session they had done in the last; but the fact was that the very reverse had happened. (Hear, hear.) The friends of the Government had assured them that if they continued to act as they had done, they would be well satisfied and give them a hearty support. (Cheers.) He was simply astonished at the statement of the hon. member that the Government had sought to stifle inquiry in the Public Accounts Committee, when he must have known that every paper they had wished, everything that would tend to facilitate proper investigation, had been supplied. (Hear.) For mere party purposes some members of the Committee had desired to bring before it matters which it was entirely improper should be brought before it; but in everything pertaining to the proper and legitimate functions of the Committee the Government had given them assistance in every possible way. They had even, as in the case of the McCandless inquiry, granted a special committee in order to afford every opportunity for the fullest investigation. (Hear, hear.) This session they had increased the power of hon. gentlemen opposite, by allowing the proportion of legal men from the Opposition to be much stronger than from his side of the House. He contended that it was not correct that the Treasurer's defeat in East Toronto had been owing to his action on the Public Accounts Committee, as it was well known that city constituencies were continually shifting their representatives. The hon. gentleman had asserted that the Government had been obliged to back down with regard to the Public Accounts Committee, but he could assure him it would require a much stronger man than the hon. member for East Grey to make the Government back down upon any right course. He believed that those scenes in the Public Accounts Committee of which the hon. member for South Simcoe had said that "they had caused the people of this country to hang their heads in shame," would not now be repeated, since that hon. member (Mr. Macdougall) was upon the Committee. (Hear, hear.) He (Mr. Mowat) would be very much surprised if they did not this year find the course pursued on that Committee much more dignified than it had been in the past. (Hear, hear.) He had been prepared to go much more fully into the whole matter if hon. gentlemen opposite had proposed an amendment, as he had been led to believe they intended so doing. He rejoiced that hon. members would soon be afforded an opportunity of making a thorough investigation of the Public Accounts. The Government desired that the investigation should be fair and impartial, and they would endeavour to prevent the Opposition from doing any improper act in the Committee.

The report was concurred in.

Mr. MOWAT moved that the hon. members for North Leeds and Algoma be added to the Private Bills Committee. Carried.

BILLS INTRODUCED.

The following Bills were introduced and