

read the first time:

By Mr. Mowat—To provide for the voting by ballot on by-laws requiring the assent of the electors.

By Mr. Mowat—Respecting Voters' Lists.

NEW COUNTIES.

Mr. HARVY asked whether the Government, during this Session, intend to introduce a general measure with respect to new county formations, or allow private legislation in respect thereto, or in respect to any particular formation.

Mr. MOWAT—It is not the intention of the Government during this session to introduce any measure with respect to new county formations, and the Government will oppose any private legislation on the subject.

ROCKWOOD ASYLUM.

Mr. ROBINSON asked whether it is the intention of the Government to purchase the Rockwood Asylum at Kingston from the Dominion Government.

Mr. MOWAT—We are still negotiating with the Dominion Government with respect to that purchase. We have not been able to come to terms, but I hope we may be able ultimately to accomplish the object we have in view.

TORONTO EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY.

Mr. BAXTER moved for a return of all correspondence between the Government and the Board of Directors of the Eye and Ear Infirmary of Toronto. He reminded the House that that institution, which had been established for a number of years, to the advantage not only of the citizens but of the people of the Province, had received Government aid during the past two years. The present building was found inadequate to meet the demands made upon it, and the Board of Directors had sent a communication to the Government asking for a sufficient amount of aid to enable them to increase the size of the premises. He was not prepared to say whether it would be prudent for the Government to grant that desired aid or not, but the correspondence on the subject should be brought down to enable members to judge of the merits of the application.

The motion was carried.

CORONERS' INQUESTS.

Mr. McMAHON moved for a "return of the number of inquests held by coroners throughout the Province of Ontario during the year 1874; how many of such inquests have been certified by the County Attorney in each county in which such inquests were held, as cases which in his opinion it was necessary to hold such inquests; and also, how many of such inquests the said official, in such county, did not consider it necessary that an investigation should be held in." The hon. member read the law respecting the holding of coroners' juries, and also a circular issued by the Government to County Attorneys in 1873, instructing them to report whether there were sufficient grounds for holding the inquests charged for under the meaning of the Act. As coroner of the county of Wentworth, he complained that this was a violation of the law, and that with the coroners devolved the duty of deciding whether the circumstances warranted the holding of an inquest or not.

Mr. WIDDIFIELD said that he had prepared a motion a short time ago, which covered almost the same ground, and was intended to draw the attention of the Government to the whole question of coroners' inquests. He suggested that the question should be amended by adding the following words:—"Also showing the whole number of coroners in the Province at the present time, with the amount of fees paid during last year."

Mr. McMAHON accepted the amendment.

Mr. CROOKS remarked that all the fees for coroners' inquests in the Province were ultimately paid out of the Provincial Treasury through his department. In consequence of abuses existing in the holding of inquests, either from the anxiety of coroners to make fees or from the ignorance of some of them as to their duties, the circular referred to had been issued. In many cases accounts were sent in for inquests which were held in direct violation of the terms of the statute. The Act emphatically declared that inquests should be held only when the circumstances attending the death were suspicious and pointed to foul play; but in working the Act an excessive expenditure had been thrown upon

the public Treasury. The regulations under which the County Attorneys reported upon the legality of inquests being held had had a wholesome effect in reducing the expenditure. The arrangement was one in the public interest, and was not intended to reflect on the body of coroners, who were composed of prominent medical men throughout the country. They had found under the old system that there was a perfect rivalry between the coroners as to who should get the work of holding inquests, and their conduct was in many cases very unseemly. The present system was, he believed, working well.

Mr. MACDOUGALL (Simcoe) admitted that it had long been felt to be an evil that coroners held inquests in cases where they were not at all necessary. He did not approve, however, of any member of the Government without statutory authority appointing other officers to decide upon questions with which they were not so competent to deal as medical men. He thought, too, that the course now pursued was not just to the coroner in the matter of fees, as he could be in some cases unjustly deprived of payment for his work after he had undertaken all the responsibility. If the public officers of the country failed in their duty let them be removed, but he was opposed to leaving the matter in the hands of the Treasurer, and hoped the law would be amended.

Mr. CLARKE (Norfolk) said he had acted as coroner for more than 23 years and had held more than 150 inquests, but had never held an inquest where he did not consider it necessary, but he knew that where he had refused other coroners had come in and held the inquest. He thought it was quite right for the Treasurer to prevent unnecessary inquests. He repudiated the statement that medical men would run after cases more than lawyers.

Mr. BETHUNE thought the Government ought to take this matter in hand. In his county there were more coroners when he was Clerk of the Peace than there had been inquests in ten years. He thought the whole business of the coroner would be well done by the sheriff, as the coroner did not make the *post mortem* examination and had to discharge judicial functions. He understood that in England there was only one coroner for a county, and the work was very well done. He contended that the Treasurer had perfect power to send out the circular he had sent out.

Mr. McMAHON said the fees paid were not commensurate with the work done. It was placing the coroners in a degrading position to ask the County Attorneys to certify to the correctness of the holding of inquests. He trusted the indignity which had been offered to the coroners would not be continued.

Mr. WILSON said he had no doubt that a larger number of inquests had been held than were necessary, but he denied that it was owing to the desire of medical men to get the fees. He believed medical men were more competent to discharge the duties of coroners than sheriffs.

Mr. BOULTER said no doubt the office of coroner had been abused, but that was owing to so many appointments being made. He opposed the suggestion to make the sheriff the coroner.

Mr. ROSS considered it quite competent for the Treasurer to make regulations in reference to this matter. There was no doubt that great evils had previously existed on the subject. He urged that the medical evidence should be paid by the Government as well as the other expenses of inquests. While not agreeing that the sheriff should be made coroner, he was of opinion that others than doctors might be appointed to the office.

Mr. CURRIE suggested that affidavits should be required before an inquest was held.

Mr. BARR did not believe any saving would result from reducing the number of coroners. He thought it degrading for the coroners to have to submit their accounts to the County Attorneys. He thought medical men were the only competent men to hold the office.

Mr. HARDY thought probably the medical men were the best to occupy the position of coroners, and did not agree with the suggestion that sheriffs should be the coroners. He did not know of any grievances which had arisen where medical men were the coroners.

The motion as amended was carried.