

isted, and had recognized it as their duty to make no change.

The Bill was read the first time.

#### SANITARY MEASURES.

Mr. MOWAT said that in the absence of the Minister of Education, owing to ill-health, he would move, "That a Select Committee be appointed to consider and report on the subject of sanitary measures for maintaining and promoting the Public Health, with power to send for persons and papers, and that such Committee do consist of the Hon. Mr. Crooks, Hon. Mr. Mowat, Messrs. Barr, Baxter, Boulter, Clarke (Norfolk), Haney, Harkin, McMahon, Mostyn, O'Sullivan, Preston, Widdifield, and Wilson." He said that the importance of adopting sanitary measures which were not yet in use had not excited a great deal of public attention, but its importance had been impressed on his attention by a number of medical gentlemen of the highest standing in Toronto and elsewhere. The more attention was given to the subject, the more important did it appear at this moment, as the revised statutes contained a couple of Acts which were the embodiment of previous legislation on the subject. That previous legislation was partly by this House—viz., 36 Victoria—and partly in the old Consolidated Statutes of Canada. The Dominion of Canada shortly after Confederation passed an Act on the subject which professed to repeal the old law on the subject in this country—though their power to repeal it was somewhat doubtful—and their Act contained a number of valuable provisions having reference to the Dominion. The Act which the House passed at the instance of the Government embodied a clause thought to be of importance which the Dominion had thus assumed to repeal so far as Canada was concerned, and also some other changes which were thought important. The present law, if it were in execution, would seem to provide amply for what was needed on this subject. It provided that each municipal council should constitute a Board of Health, and in ordinary times they could either act themselves in that capacity or commit their power to any two of their number, to visit houses or other places where disease or what occasioned disease was supposed to exist, and to remove the causes, whatever they might be. In times of epidemic the Governor in Council had power to constitute a Central Board, to which for the time, or for a special purpose, the local Boards were subordinate during the time it was in existence. The subject was one which had received much larger attention in many other countries than in this, and provisions had been adopted which were not in force here. In England the subject was deemed to be of such importance—and indeed had been demonstrated by actual experience to be so important—that it was one of the great public questions at the last elections. For once in their lives Conservatives had claimed to be like Reformers, as they had presented this matter of sanitary arrangements to the attention of the Government. He hoped they would always deserve as much commendation as they had by their action in this matter. It was one of equal interest to both parties, as many questions of legislation were, though one party had to take the initiative. Since that period valuable legislation had taken place in England; all the old laws, numerous and complicated as they were, had been consolidated and revised, and they now formed a very full and very effective body of laws on the subject, though it would not be expedient to adopt them here. The subject was one of great importance, and was a fair subject for legislative and Governmental action. If precedents were required it was sufficient perhaps to refer to the Mother Country, but he might say that the subject had engaged a larger measure of attention in some of the United States than had been given to it here, and that sixteen or seventeen of the States had adopted measures not yet adopted in this country, and for which perhaps there was the same necessity here as in these States. The estimate of the death rate here was 18 to 1,000.

That might not be correct; but if the death rate should be reduced by even one in one thousand, hon. members would see what a large difference it would make in a country with a population so large as ours. Facts which had come to light showed that a decrease much greater than that had been effected. In some places where sanitary measures had been adopted, the death rate had been lessened by one-half, in others by one-third, and so on. It was said by one high authority that preventible diseases caused one-third of the deaths, and other authorities had placed it even higher. Now, what they wanted to ascertain was whether as a Legislature they could do anything that would have an advantageous bearing on this matter—anything to lessen the percentage of disease. The general sentiment of medical men was that a good deal could be done, though they might not all agree as to what could be done without further consideration and discussion. The decrease of the death rate was not the only thing to be considered; the amount of sickness involved in the death rate was a material element in the matter. He believed that the calculation was that there were 730 days of illness on the average to every death; and, as they would all see, this involved a great incidental loss of happiness, wealth, and time. There were a number of eminent medical men on both sides of the House, and the Government had come to the conclusion that they could get more valuable information by appointing a Committee of these gentlemen than by any other means, and that these gentlemen would not only be willing, but glad to pursue an enquiry having in view objects so important. The desire was to present whatever was ascertainable, by statistics or otherwise, as the material for further legislation on the subject, if such legislation were found to be required.

Mr. CAMERON commended the objects of the proposed enquiry, and said that on the principle that "an ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure" their importance would be admitted by every hon. member. He did not know, however, whether it was the intention of the Attorney-General to have the Committee report by Bill, or whether he had formed any particular scheme in regard to the matter. If it was the intention of the Government to take the power out of the hands of the municipal authorities which they now held, the result might be a clashing of convenience, if not of interests. If, for example, there was to be an inspection of one's premises by officers of the Government as well as by those of the municipality, the effect might be decidedly inconvenient. He was sure that the Government would have the cordial assistance of the Opposition in any such enquiry.

Mr. MOWAT said his aim was to leave the matter very much in the hands of the Committee, as he had formed no definite scheme with regard to the matter. He thought, however, it would be out of the question to do away with the local Boards, though there might be a necessity for legislation making these boards more effective. If the present local Boards would only exert their powers, actively, independently, and zealously, nothing more might be needed. But they did not occupy their minds on the subject, their powers were allowed to lie dormant. So far as he could observe from the legislation in the United States, the local Boards were allowed to exist, though assistance was afforded them in many cases by a Superintending Board constituted for the purpose of assisting, though not for that purpose only. There were peculiar duties and opportunities which a provincial Board might exercise, independently of any subordination of the local Board. If, however, the Committee were to come to a different conclusion with regard to the local Boards, he would feel perfectly free to adopt any means in the public interest.

Mr. MACDOUGALL (Simcoe), while sympathizing with the object of the proposed enquiry, hoped there would not be any legislation which would tend to take any more power out of the hands of