

reports should be printed and circulated through the country, without submission to Parliament, and before they had gone through the usual constitutional formula. (Hear, hear.) The resolution asked for a subversion of the constitutional practice, inasmuch as it contemplated that members of the House scattered throughout the country should be recognised as a Parliamentary body. He was certainly surprised to find the hon. member for South Simcoe indirectly attacking the Constitution in this manner, especially when it was recollected that at the time it was proposed to introduce a Bill to alter the Constitution of this House, the hon. gentleman had treated the public of this Province to a number of letters addressed to the Attorney-General, in which he had accused that gentleman of violating the Constitution in various ways, and especially in that particular way. It would seem that the hon. gentleman had reached that stage when he did not care whether he "blew a hole in the Constitution" or not, so long as political ends could be served. (Hear, hear.) The position of the Government in the matter was that they would retain (until a case for a contrary rule had been made out) the well understood constitutional rule that these reports should be presented to the Lieutenant-Governor; that they should be brought down to the House in session, and there submitted to the people's representatives in Parliament. His opinion was that a case had not been made out for a change, for when the Public Accounts were not brought down for the year immediately preceding, an abstract was supplied, giving all the accounts the Committee could desire; and, furthermore, all the vouchers that might be asked for could be submitted. (Hear, hear, and loud cheers.)

MR. MEREDITH said that in February, 1876, the Public Accounts Committee had reported to the House—Mr. Gow being the chairman of that Committee at the time—that they were unable to perform their duties properly because they were not in possession of the detailed statement. The same report recognized the fact that a full investigation could not be made when the accounts for the year immediately preceding were not in the hands of the Committee. The position taken in that report was that the reports might be brought down in February. With regard to the question of interfering with constitutional practice, the Government were not so careful of that practice when they changed the rules of the House last session, and especially that rule which enabled members, by protracting a debate, to prevent legislation being forced in the House which was not in the interest of the country. The Government had limited that rule, and had shown that they were not then so careful of the Constitution as they pretended to be to-day. He could see no difficulty that would occur from passing the resolution, for at this time of day it was idle to talk of keeping these reports from the public press, as they were often discussed in the papers before they were considered by the representatives of the people.

Mr. WOOD said that with regard to the Public Accounts there would be great difficulty in carrying out the proposed change. He had done all he could in order to have them brought down during the session, even going so far as to employ extra hands. The accountant was the officer who had charge of all the vouchers, orders in Council, and other papers, and it had been found necessary to have that gentleman present at the meetings of the Public Accounts Committee. The vouchers, accounts, &c., were spread out on the table, and considerably disarranged, and it involved a great loss of time and consequent delay to have these all rearranged so that the work of preparing the report could be proceeded with. If it was at all possible to bring down the Public Accounts in detail this session, they should be brought down.

Mr. MACDOUGALL (Simcoe) said he rose to make an explanation. He did not say what he had said regarding the conduct of the Commissioner of Public Works because he had any fear of that gentleman, for

whatever his (Mr. Macdougall's) reputation might be, he did not think it could be said that he was in the habit of quailing before even the Goliath of the Government. He had simply thought it a good opportunity of calling the attention of Mr. Speaker and of the House to a habit of that hon. gentleman of using language towards himself and other members of the Opposition which he considered was a violation of parliamentary rule. He read from May to support the contention that the imputation of motives other than those avowed by the Speaker, or the use of contemptuous language towards another member, was a violation of the rules of Parliament. The hon. gentleman had charged him with breaking another rule of the House in referring to a previous debate. He (Mr. Macdougall) contended that he had a right to make that reference, as the same authority admitted that right under peculiar circumstances, and when it was exercised by consent of the Speaker. A member was allowed to refer to a previous debate when he had a personal complaint to make or in order to clear up a misrepresentation of his character. He had not referred to any subject outside of the present debate.

Mr. SPEAKER said—With respect to the point of order, which had been suggested rather than raised, I may say that I was at first inclined to call the gentleman to order, for there is no rule which should be more carefully observed than the one now invoked; upon reflection, however, I came to a different conclusion. The House will remember that the hon. member introduced his remarks by saying that the hon. member for South Simcoe, as an old parliamentarian, knew that it was according to ordinary and well understood tactics that resolutions should be moved, not with the view of carrying them, but for the purpose of embarrassing their opponents; and he said further that that was the motive with which certain resolutions had been moved last session. The rule as to imputing motives is that no member shall impute bad motives, or motives different from those professed. I can hardly say that the hon. member imputed a bad motive when he said that certain motions were made, according to old Parliamentary tactics, not with the view of carrying them, but with the view of embarrassing the Government. Nor do I know whether the gentlemen who moved those resolutions now profess that they intended to carry them, and not merely to embarrass the Government. Considering that the resolutions referred to were moved last session, considering that the motives of no particular member were referred to, but the whole Opposition collectively, and considering that it is doubtful, at all events, whether the motive imputed was a bad motive, I felt a difficulty about holding that the words referred to were out of order.

Mr. CREIGHTON disclaimed any intention of making political capital by his resolution, as he had found fault with the system and not with the men. He was surprised that a Reformer like the Attorney-General should shelter himself behind the plea that the proposed change would make a hole in the British Constitution. He mentioned as an instance of the absurdity of certain obsolete forms which were retained the one which prohibited the printing of the Votes and Proceedings of the House other than those appointed by the Speaker. If that rule were enforced the gentlemen who were now in the gallery reporting this debate would be excluded from the House. He thought that members should be in possession of the departmental reports much earlier than they were, and he could see no evil consequences that would arise if they were distributed to members when the House was not sitting. As there was no probability of the resolution being carried, he would consent to its withdrawal.

The order was then discharged.

Mr. MOWAT moved the adjournment of the House.

The House adjourned at six o'clock.