

House.

Mr. LAUDER—When was that made public?

Mr. FRASER said he was reading from the Sessional Orders of 1877.

Mr. LAUDER said the order must have been brought down last session, and been published during the recess.

Mr. FRASER—Everybody knows that.

Mr. MACDOUGALL—Does the hon. gentleman say that order in Council was laid before the House?

Mr. FRASER said it was not formally laid before the House, but in the discussions that took place in the House it was perfectly well understood that the order in Council was passed.

Mr. O'DONOGHUE thought the hon. member for North Grey was more anxious for political capital in this matter, and the hon. Commissioner of Public Works for the defence of the Government than for the public interest. (Laughter and cheers.) He alleged that the public printing of this Province could be done at least one-third cheaper by other firms in the city than by Messrs. Hunter, Rose, & Co. If the increased amount had been given to the labourers who worked for that firm; there might be some justification of it, but, instead of doing that, they dismissed the men, and put the girls in their places, paying them a smaller rate and putting the increased amount of the contract in their own pockets. He had no desire to injure Messrs. Hunter, Rose, & Co., but he thought the Government had no right to alter their contract with that firm. (Opposition cheers.) The matter might have been left over till the Printing Committee had reported, but the House would probably have occasion to hear more of it before the close of the session.

Mr. FRASER read a statement made by Mr. Harkney, of Ottawa, under an enquiry directed by the Government, in justification of the increase which had been made.

Mr. SCOTT objected to the imputations of political motives which had been made against the hon. member for North Grey. He contended that the House understood the increase in the printing made in 1874, on the recommendation of the Printing Committee, to be merely a temporary expedient to relieve the Government of the great mass of work which had accumulated. But the same increased rates had continued—he was not aware whether they had been paid.

Mr. FRASER said Messrs. Hunter, Rose & Co. still claimed the same rates, but they had not been paid during the past two years.

Mr. SCOTT said there was no reason, why the increased prices should have been paid in the year 1875. The Government had no right to enter into this contract or any other contract for public work without the knowledge of the public or consent of the House, and without asking the House to ratify what they had done. By so doing, and neglecting to make this contract a subject of tender, they had done injustice to other printing firms, and enabled Messrs. Hunter, Rose, & Co. to pocket their additional profits and to build palatial residences in the city. This was hardly in accordance with the Reform principles professed for so many years by hon. gentlemen opposite. They had really, without the consent of Parliament, entered into a new contract with Messrs. Hunter, Rose, & Co., by which these gentlemen were able to make a large amount of money.

Mr. FRASER read from the minutes of the Public Accounts Committee for January 17th, 1877, to show that the items under the head of printing were adopted without remonstrance or objection, although the member for East Grey (Mr. Lauder) and several other members of the Opposition were present. (Cheers.)

Mr. LAUDER—That report was only presented on the last day of last session.

Mr. SCOTT said it did not touch his argument; for the minutes of the Committee related to the year 1874, while he was speaking of the year 1875.

Mr. FRASER—I may say that I have just learned that no increases were paid for the printing of the year 1875, and I make that correction at once, so that the hon. gentleman may shape his arguments accordingly. (Cheers and laughter.)

Mr. SCOTT was very glad to hear the statement, but the hon. Commissioner of Public Works had consumed considerable time in trying to convince the House that it was not wrong to pay this money in 1875. (Opposition cheers.) Now, at the end of the discussion, he had corrected what he had been saying. In reply to Mr. Lauder,

Mr. FRASER repeated his last statement, and said the extra claims of Messrs. Hunter, Rose, & Co. were still made by the firm and still disputed by the Government.

Mr. LAUDER observed that the last statement of Mr. Notman, Queen's Printer to the Public Accounts Committee last year was, that he had repeatedly brought the matter under the notice of the Government, and had not yet received final instructions as to the payment of the balance claimed by Messrs. Hunter, Rose, & Co. He thought the head of the Public Works Department should take the responsibility of settling these claims speedily.

Mr. CLARKE (Wellington) showed that Mr. Lauder was present at the Public Accounts Committee, both when the printing accounts were passed and when the minutes of the meeting at which they were passed were confirmed, but had made no objection on either occasion. As Chairman of the Printing Committee he (Mr. Clarke) had been empowered to make what arrangements he could for the accumulated work of 1873. He went to Hunter, Rose, & Co.'s, and to other printing firms, and found that while the former offered to do the work at forty cents per thousand ems, none of the latter would do it for less than fifty cents. (Hear, hear.) Under the circumstances, the work was distributed among several printing offices, the House agreeing that the price paid to Hunter, Rose, & Co. should be forty cents per thousand ems. The circumstances necessitating the increased payment continued for the following year and some time longer, and the printers' strike extended to Ottawa, and in fact all over the Dominion. Messrs. Hunter, Rose & Co., were willing to pay the forfeiture of \$2,000 required by their contract, rather than continue to do the work at 28 cents a thousand, and had the Government broken off the contract, they would have had to pay to other firms a considerably larger amount than Hunter, Rose, & Co. asked. He, therefore, thought that what was done was a simple act of justice and economy on the part of the Government, and that their action would receive the approbation of the House.

Mr. MACDOUGALL (Simcoe) was glad to hear the voice of his old friend, the member for Wellington (Mr. Clarke), at whose remarks, however, he was surprised, considering his devotion to Reform principles in his young days, for that hon. gentleman was defending the improper action of the Government in this matter—a breach of well-known Reform principles. He (Mr. Macdougall) refused to be held responsible for the decisions of the Public Accounts Committee, so long as that Committee was controlled by the Government. He contended that the Government had no right to pay these prices, for they were obtained on false pretences by Messrs. Hunter, Rose, & Co., who alleged that the strike necessitated the payment of higher wages, while the fact was that they had substituted apprentices and girls for those who had gone out on strike. The whole tenor of the hon. the Commissioner of Public Works' argument was to show that these increased prices were reasonable, while the hon. gentleman for Ottawa—himself a printer—had stated that the work could be done at a cost of one-third less. He observed that a resolution passed by the Reform Convention affirmed that Parliamentary authority over the public expenditure had been vindicated by the Reform Government in Ontario. Had it? he asked. Did the transaction they were discussing exhibit the Government in the light of Reformers who had