

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

FOURTH PARLIAMENT—THIRD SESSION.

(By Our Own Reporters.)

THURSDAY, Jan. 25.

The Speaker took the chair at 3 o'clock.

PETITIONS.

The following petitions were presented:—

Mr. Gibson (Huron)—Of the Township Council of Howick, respecting certain protective clauses in the Act of last session relating to the Toronto, Grey, and Bruce Railway.

TIMBER LIMITS SALE.

Mr. PARDEE desired to call the attention of the House to some remarks made by the hon. member for Leeds and Grenville (Mr. Merrick) with regard to the recent timber sale. His hon. friend had stated that somewhere about 20,000 square miles of territory were now under license, and asked the House, in a somewhat tragic manner, if they understood what 20,000 meant. It meant, he said, nothing less than 120,000,000 acres of land. He (Mr. Pardee) had been rather startled at this, but having figured the matter up he found that instead of 120,000,000 acres, it amounted to only 12,800,000. (Laughter.) He happened to recollect likewise that in the whole Province of Ontario, outside of the disputed territory, there were only about 64,000,000 acres. (Hear, hear.) He thought the House would find that his hon. friend was mistaken with regard to the other branch of the subject as well. And if his hon. friend's arguments were no more correct or sound than his figures, the effect would not be serious upon the House or the country. His hon. friend took the position, first, that the Government had no right to make a sale of timber limits unless by authority of the House; and secondly, that there was no necessity or emergency requiring this sale at all. In support of his first contention his hon. friend had called the attention of the House to a debate that had taken place in the session of 1873 upon a Crown timber sale that had been held in the fall of the previous year, and had boldly stated that members supporting the Government—Reform members—had taken the ground that no sale should be held without the consent of Parliament. From these premises he (Mr. Merrick) had drawn the conclusion that the present Government was violating the principles laid down by the Reform party in the House at that time. He (Mr. Pardee) unhesitatingly stated that the present Government had not in any way, or in any degree, gone back upon their principles or their record. (Applause.) They had not gone back upon their record in the question under discussion, and he would refer to the debate to which his hon. friend had alluded to show that the reverse of what had been stated was the case. He quoted certain resolutions made during the course of that discussion with regard to the management of unsurveyed Crown lands and the method of placing them on the market, among others, one moved by Mr. Wood (now Provincial Treasurer) declaring that no licenses should be granted until the territory it was proposed they should cover was surveyed. An amendment was moved by Mr. Lauder concurring in the desirability of surveying wild lands before granting licenses, but regretting "that so large a portion of the timber territory of this Province was recently sold to licensees at public sale without first consulting the representatives of the people as to the propriety of the course intended to be pursued." His hon. friend from Leeds and Grenville, in order to prove his charge of inconsistency, ought to be able to show that several members supporting the Government at that time voted for that amendment. What were the facts? If his hon. friend would turn to the journals of the House where the division was recorded, he would find that eighteen members voted "Yea" upon that resolution, and not one single one of them was a Reformer. (Cheers.) On the other hand, no fewer than nine members who were in political sympathy with hon. gentlemen opposite voted against it. (Applause.) Again, another amendment on that occasion was moved by Hon. E. B. Wood approving of the "policy of the Crown Land Department as set forth in the regulations of the Department made in 1869," and declaring that wild lands, where it was intended that the timber upon them should be sold, should be surveyed and valued, and that the berths or limits should "be offered for sale by public auction at the upset price fixed by such valuation, at such time and place, and upon such conditions, and by such officer, as the Commissioner of Crown Lands shall direct by public notice for that purpose, and shall be sold to the highest bidder, for cash, at the time of sale." One would have supposed that hon. gentlemen having contended that no sales should take place without the consent of Parliament would have opposed that resolution. Would it be believed that the then leader of the Opposition (Mr. Cameron) and several other members on that side of the House, actually voted in favour of it? Besides Mr. Cameron, he found among those who voted "yea" the names of Mr. Lauder (Hear, hear), Mr. Meredith (Hear, hear), and Mr. Merrick himself (Cheers), together with a number of other gentlemen in sympathy with them—in fact, only four Conservatives voted against it. The rules and regulations mentioned in that resolution were exactly in accordance with the rules and regulations under which the late sale had taken place, and he would ask hon. members if, in view of that fact, the Government were not justified in making that sale without first asking the consent of Parliament. (Cheers.) Further, another amendment was moved by Mr. McLeod stating that the House, having heard the Commissioner of Crown Lands declare that it was not the intention of the Government for some time to add to the extent of the territory under license, were of the opinion that it was unwise to disturb the practice which had hitherto existed of leaving the management of the subject to the Governor in Council. That motion was carried unanimously, not even his friend from Leeds and Grenville vot-

ing against it. (Applause.) He (Mr. Pardee) supposed that if he were to adopt the course followed by the organ of hon. gentlemen opposite, he would charge his hon. friend with disgraceful garbling and misrepresentation, with having suppressed the truth and suggested a falsehood, and with having made false quotations; but he did not charge his hon. friend with anything of the sort. He merely said he was mistaken, that he was in error, and that he had misread, or had not read all the resolutions that were offered to the House at that time. With reference to what his hon. friend the member from Muskoka (Mr. Miller) had said—viz., that there ought to be on record something declaring that no sale should take place except at public auction—he would point him to the resolution of the House which he had just read and which affirmed that principle, and he had no doubt that the hon. member from Muskoka, if he had been aware of this resolution, would have been perfectly satisfied with the rules and regulations and with the law as it now stands upon this subject. The Government had been charged with disrespect to the House in not having previously informed it of their intention to dispose of the territory offered for sale, and it was said that in regard to the sale that had been held in 1877 such an intimation was made. He (Mr. Pardee) remembered making that intimation, and undoubtedly if the Government had last session arrived at the determination to hold the sale which had lately taken place, they would have taken the House into their confidence. But that was not because of any previous resolution of the House; it was simply because they were at all times desirous of being open and frank as to their policy in all public matters, as they had nothing to conceal in their management of public affairs. His hon. friend had also questioned the necessity of the sale, and had declared that there was no emergency such as would warrant it. The Government had stated in the Address that it was held in the interests of settlement and revenue. It was in the interests of settlement, because the townships sold were being rapidly settled. Notwithstanding the fact that under the new law there is a joint ownership in the timber after the patent issues, yet when people were allowed to become located before the time of sale, soreness was sure to arise on account of the timber. It was further in the interests of settlement, because the lumberman, while engaged in his operations, afforded the only home market for the produce of the settler, as well as gave him employment, and thus assisted him in his earlier and poorer days when he was most in need of such assistance. He (Mr. Pardee) further held that the sale had in the interests of revenue been held at an eminently proper time. The lumber trade was in a state of great activity, the lumbermen had sold their timber and lumber at Quebec and in other markets, and had not yet had an opportunity of investing their means in new enterprises, and he held that the date selected was a far better and more opportune one than any that could have been chosen some months afterwards. There was another reason for holding the sale at the time they did. Information had come to the Government that more or less damage had been done in that section of the country by the recent fires, and in order to save the timber to the revenue, and to the country it was necessary as every lumberman knew, that it should be cut and removed within a year. If the contention of his hon. friend from Leeds and Grenville were correct, and had been acted upon, that timber would have been entirely lost. At that sale, as they knew, they had realized about three-quarters of a million and he had no hesitation in saying that if they were to hold now, or three months from now, so large an amount would not be realized. He also desired to call the attention of the House to the fact that they had not sold the timber upon that territory, nor had they sold the land. All that they had done was to sell the naked right to cut the timber, and when the Government came to collect the dues upon the timber, they would then get its value to the country. Was it any more desirable that the consent of the House should be asked with regard to such a sale than with regard to the placing of new townships upon the market for sale or location? If restrictions of this kind were to be placed upon the Crown Lands Department, the working of its whole machinery would be clogged and impeded. He briefly reviewed the past policy of hon. gentlemen opposite and their friends, when in power, in regard to this matter, and showed that they placed the timber lands under license at the very inconsiderable rate of from fifty cents to four dollars a square mile. Somewhere between 12,000 and 15,000 square miles had been placed under license at such figures, and he calculated that between \$2,000,000 and \$3,000,000 had been lost to the country by the adoption of such a policy. (Cheers.) The desire of hon. gentlemen opposite seemed to be to reduce the responsibility of Ministers to the lowest degree—to a minimum, in fact. Was that because they were afraid of themselves? Were they afraid that they would not be able to trust themselves if they should ever come to occupy the seats on this side of the House? He (Mr. Pardee) did not think it in the interests of effective government or of the people that the responsibility of Ministers should be removed and placed upon Parliament.

Mr. MEREDITH—Hear, hear.

Mr. PARDEE said that was sound doctrine, and doctrine he would establish. If the responsibility for ordinary administrative acts were taken from Ministers and placed upon the House, it would be damaging to the interests of the country. He held it to be the proper, wise, and constitutional course for the House to entrust the Government with ordinary administrative matters, and then to hold the members thereof collectively and individually responsible for their action. If the other course contended for were adopted there would be danger of the Government endeavouring to shield itself behind the authority of the House if a blunder had been committed. He read from Todd's work on Parliamentary Government in England to show that Ministerial responsibility in matters of administration was an essential feature of Parliamentary Government. (Hear, hear.) He thought the common sense of the House and of the country would sustain the action the Government had taken in the matter, and his hon. friends opposite were welcome to all the political capital they could make out of it. (Cheers.)

Mr. MERRICK, in reply, quoted from the