

FRIDAY, March 7.

The Speaker took the chair at 3 o'clock.

Mr. MOWAT said, in reply to Mr. Ferris, that no new commissions of the peace other than supplementary have been issued since he had been Premier. Between the dates mentioned in the question, March 1st, 1883, and 29th February, 1884, for various counties other than the united counties of Leeds and Grenville, some of them contain one name, others more than one. For instance: there had been issued in Brant one, Carleton one, Elgin one, Frontenac two—in all 51 commissions had been issued.

Mr. MEREDITH—All supporters of the Government.

Mr. MOWAT—Well they ought to be.

COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATION.

Mr. DRURY moved that a Select Committee be appointed to consider the desirability of so amending the Municipal Act that the number of members in County Councils may be reduced. The Committee to have power to send for persons and papers. In support of the motion he said the country has arrived at a stage where the scale of representation in County Councils is too large. The number of members constituting the various County Councils in the Province has increased until it has become a public burden, and in almost all the large counties there is a strong feeling in favour of reducing the representation in municipalities. On the 22nd January, 1883, he moved for returns showing the number of Reeves and deputy-Reeves in the counties, together with the statement of the amounts paid as indemnity to members. These returns include all the counties except Bruce, Haliburton, Lanark, Dundas, Stormont, and Glengarry. The returns give the number of Councillors in the various Councils for the years 1872 and 1881. In Carleton there were 18 members in 1872, and 24 members in 1882; Elgin, 17 in 1872 and 25 in 1881; Grey, 35 and 38; Hastings, 20 and 31; Huron, 34 and 47; Leeds and Grenville, 28 and 35; Middlesex, 38 and 49; Norfolk, 16 and 21; Northumberland and Durham, 39 and 41; Ontario, 26 and 33; Simcoe, 41 and 50; Waterloo, 19 and 23; Wellington, 34 and 37; York, 28 and 44. In the nine years it was found the numbers had increased from 780 to 936, omitting the counties above-mentioned, or an increase of 20 per cent. The cost for indemnity to members has increased in the same time from \$29,490 in 1872 to \$42,271 in 1881, or an increase of 40 per cent. The point he wished to make especially was this—that from his experience in municipal affairs he was struck with the fact these numbers would not be stationary, but were subject to a certain increase from year to year. There is a strong inducement for villages to seek incorporation, and whenever they have sufficient inhabitants they apply for incorporation; and when a municipality has more than 500 ratepayers it is entitled to a deputy-reeve. There is room in this way for the number of representatives to increase to a very large proportion. It is possible for a county with 40 municipalities to increase its representation to 200. The only point for consideration was whether the time had come now to devise a remedy or whether the question might be delayed. His opinion was the time had come to discuss the matter. His motion was to have a committee of members composed of experienced municipal men, not with a view of taking effective action this year, but so as to be able to show the people that the House was taking action in the matter. He did not wish to say anything disparaging to County Councils, but his experience was that the ordinary business of County Councils was not of such a character that it required the presence of such a large number of men. In the United States, he was informed, they had a system of county government transacted by commissioners, five of whom transact the business of large counties, and that system was found to work well. He contended that the duty of county councils was rather the raising of money, and that they really controlled very little expenditure. He had carefully examined the accounts of the county of Simcoe, and he had found that it had been \$38,000. He now proposed to give the expenditure over which the councils had control, and in this he had included every single item properly controllable by the councils, and he had found that, including printing, grants to roads and bridges (a very important item), pay of the County Council, law charges, fuel—of this \$38,000 the County Council controlled only \$13,000 or \$14,000. In one year they had levied \$24,450, and it cost \$5,686 to do it; the preceding year the Council levied \$20,000 at a cost of \$5,450, and in other years the cost had been running between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to control an expenditure of between \$15,000 or \$16,000.

Mr. MEREDITH—What does that \$5,000 include?

Mr. DRURY—Indemnity to members, the pay of a messenger or two. He had, however, to admit that Simcoe had been rather pronounced in the matter of expenditure, arising, as he thought, from the size of the county and running about 140 miles between two points. He found that the county of York, in 1881, expended \$3,624; Hastings, \$1,975; Huron, \$1,755, and Grey, \$2,202, upon the county councils. It should be remembered, as he had stated, that the larger portion of the expenditure was done without the interference of the county councils at all. It had been represented that county councils were in the