

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE

Sixth Parliament --- First Session.

(By Our Own Reporters.)

MONDAY, April 13.

THE LONDON HOSPITAL.

Mr. MEREDITH introduced a bill regarding the regulation of the Hospital in London. The proposition was that the general management of the hospital shall be vested in a Board of Trustees consisting of the Mayor and four other officers, who shall be as follows:—One to be appointed by the Government, one by the County Council of Middlesex and two by the City Council of London. The elected representatives will retire each year. No medical man in actual practice is eligible as a member of the Board.

By the unanimous consent of the House the bill was read a first time.

THIRD READINGS.

The following bills were read the third time and passed:—

To incorporate the Western Fair Association.—Mr. Meredith.

To amend the Act incorporating the Sandwich & Windsor Passenger Railway Company.—Mr. Balfour.

For the protection of infant children.—The Attorney-General.

IN COMMITTEE.

The following bills were re-committed and amended:—

To authorise the Corporation of the City of London to borrow certain moneys for Public School purposes.—Mr. Meredith.

Respecting the guardianship of minors.—Mr. Hardy.

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Hon. G. W. ROSS moved the third reading of the bill to amend the Act respecting the Education Department.

Mr. MEREDITH said it was not fitting that the Opposition should omit to refer to some matters which had been extensively discussed during the late campaign. An attempt was made during that campaign to impute to the Conservative party a position of hostility to the Roman Catholic people and to the Roman Catholic Church. He repudiated that charge, as he had repudiated it before. But he was not going to be prevented from criticising the acts of the Legislature on account of any such cry. It would be a most unfortunate thing if, in the discussion of public questions, the mouths of our public men

SHOULD BE MUZZLED,

and he did not propose that any muzzle should be placed upon his mouth. While he regretted that it had been found necessary to establish in this Province a system of Separate schools, he did not believe this Legislature could interfere with the matter. All they had to do was to see that fair play and equal rights were accorded to all. The principle upon which Separate schools were granted, after a long and acrimonious discussion, was the voluntary principle. It was said to be unfair that Roman Catholic parents should be called upon to support a school system of which their consciences did not approve. He contended that that principle showed the principle of voluntary

action. Part of the ratepayers, and should not be departed from. There were several points on which the legislation which had emanated from this House was said to be unfair to the Protestant people of this Province. It was said that the voluntary principle was departed from in the regulation declaring how ratepayers

SHOULD BE ASSESSED

for Separate and for Public schools. If the only object of this legislation was merely to provide machinery to show who were Separate school supporters, then it was most fair and reasonable. Another question that had arisen was whether the landlord or the tenant paid the school rates, and which of them had the right to say how the taxes should be applied. In this Province the tenant was declared to have that right. In Manitoba exactly the opposite rule prevailed. He thought it would be a fair arrangement if the tenant were presumed to be the taxpayer, but the

LANDLORD AND TENANT

were allowed by their own agreement to make a different arrangement. Another point was the regulation which allowed the election of Separate school representatives on the High School Board. That could be defended upon no logical principle. It was a privilege given to no other religious body in the Province. It was said that no municipal council where there was a Protestant majority had been fair enough to appoint a Roman Catholic on the High School Board.

Hon. Mr. FRASER said that he had himself stated that Roman Catholics had been appointed in Trenton, Brockville and other places.

Mr. MEREDITH, continuing, said they must let it be understood that in this matter of education the State must be absolutely supreme. They ought not to have again to fight this battle in the Province of Ontario. Whatever the voice of any particular Church might be it must be established that the State was absolutely supreme in matters of education. It must follow that the State must see to the text-books used in the schools. He had no doubt as to the good intentions of the Legislature in the regulations they had provided in this connection, and the principles laid down by them had been very good, but he claimed that those had not been put into practice. Now, as to

THE LANGUAGE QUESTION.

There should be no difference of opinion among members of the House that the English language should be the language of the Province. He wanted publicly to declare that he had no sympathy with those who wanted to attack a neighboring Province, or with those who advocated an interference with the rights and powers guaranteed them under an ancient constitution, but he did insist that in Ontario, where those rights did not extend, the English language should be the language of the schools, though he would admit that in localities where French was the prevailing language of the vast majority of the people, the Department would be justified in making certain exceptional provisions and limitations in regard to text books. Concerning the question of religious instruction in the Public schools, he said the public opinion of Ontario demanded that at least the fundamental principles of Christianity should be taught in the Public schools. A good deal had been said during the recent campaign regarding the Book of Selections prepared by the Minister of Education. He would not enter upon a discussion of it, nor would he say anything to wound anybody's feelings. It had been argued by the Education Department that if the Book of Selections to which he referred were substituted for the