

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

Sixth Parliament, Second Session.

(By Our Own Reporter.)

WEDNESDAY, March 7, 1888.

The Speaker took the chair at three o'clock.

FIRST READINGS.

The following bills were introduced and read a first time:—

To amend the Municipal Act—Mr. Craig.

To amend the Municipal Act—Mr. Lees.

To amend the Municipal Act—Mr. Wood (Brant).

THE TWO FRONTS.

Hon. Mr. FRASER moved the third reading of the bill to provide for the union of Front of Yonge and Front of Escott.

Mr. PRESTON moved in amendment that the bill be referred back to committee, and that it be so amended as to enable it to be submitted to the municipalities interested, and voted on and become law only if approved by a majority in each place.

Hon. Mr. FRASER defended the bill, and insisted that the bill would be for the best interests of both municipalities.

Mr. WOOD (Hastings) supported the amendment and claimed that the bill had been unfairly pressed upon the Private Bills Committee, and there were some incidents occurring in the committee of which every member of that body ought to feel ashamed.

Mr. HARCOURT said he was present at the meeting of the Private Bills Committee when this bill had passed it, and remembered no such incidents as those to which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wood) referred.

Mr. MEREDITH supported the amendment, and in doing so claimed that the practice of Ministers of the Crown bringing in private bills was most objectionable and went to have unfair influence on the committee.

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton) said it was true that a petition was presented purporting to represent the majority of the people of Escott, and, as far as the number of names was concerned, the petition did so. It was shown, however, that this petition was irregular, and that many of the names had not been placed there by the originals. Other information from deputations and other sources which was laid before the committee enabled the committee to perceive that the large majority of the people of Yonge were in favor of the proposed union, and that at the worst the people of the other township were almost evenly divided on the subject. As chairman of the Private Bills Committee, he had no hesitation in defending its action in connection with the bill under discussion.

Mr. WOOD rose to explain his reference to what occurred in the committee. He said that while he (Mr. Wood) was addressing the committee the Commissioner of Public Works insisted upon speaking, and the chairman (Mr. Gibson, of Hamilton,) had allowed him to do so on the ground that the promoter of the bill had exceptional privileges. The Commissioner had also insisted that the opponents of the bill should speak first and the chairman had sustained them there also.

Hon. C. F. FRASER said that when he rose in the committee it was to make a personal explanation, the member for North Hastings having charged him with making an unfair statement before the committee. He had not asked for any privilege on the ground that he was the promoter of the bill, nor had the chairman made any such rulings. Then the reason that he had asked that the opponents of the bill should speak first, was that the promoters by their petitions had made out a prima facie case, which required an answer.

Mr. WIDDIFIELD said he usually was able to hold in high esteem the ruling of the chairman of the Public Bills Committee, but after the decision which had just been called into question he would not be able to entertain a similar view in future.

Mr. O'CONNOR said he had tried his best to forget partisanship in connection with this bill as in connection with all other bills that came before the committee, and he had opposed the hon. Commissioner for Public Works and voted against this particular bill, but it was perfectly useless for hon. gentlemen on his side of the House to attempt to suppress partisanship even in committee, for hon. gentlemen opposite thrust their party feeling into everything they had to deal with. He thought the present attack on the chairman of the committee was simply an insult to him, and in him, to every member of the committee, for it suggested that the committee had been unfair in agree-

ing with the ruling of the chairman. He most heartily agreed with and supported the ruling of the committee.

Mr. GRAHAM, as a member of the committee, urged that the action of the chairman of the Private Bills Committee had been everything that could be desired.

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton) defended his action as chairman, and claimed that very few hon. gentlemen opposite—not more than two or three, he felt convinced—would agree that he had been unfair in acting as he did. (Applause.)

Mr. MEREDITH regretted the personal turn the discussion had taken, and felt bound to say that so far as his experience went the chairman of the Private Bills Committee had always acted fairly and impartially in matters that came under his consideration. At the same time he felt convinced that his hon. friend the member for Hastings (Mr. Wood) would not have acted as he had but for a misapprehension, which no doubt had been removed by the technical explanation of the chairman of the committee. (Applause.)

The amendment was then put to the vote, Mr. Widdifield calling for a division, the result of which was as follows:—

YEAS.—Blyth, Clancy, Clarke, H. E. (Toronto), Craig, Creighton, Cruess, Fell, French, Hamnell, Hess, Hudson, Ingram, Kerns, Lees, Meacham, Meredith, Metcalfe, Miller, Monk, Morgan, Ostrom, Preston, Rorke, Stewart, Tooley, Whitney, Wilmot, Wood (Hastings), Wylie—29.

NAYS.—Armstrong, Awrey, Balfour, Ballantyne, Bishop, Blezard, Bronson, Chisholm, Clarke (Northumberland), Clarke (Wellington), Connee, Daek, Drury, Dryden, Evanturel, Ferguson, Field, Fraser, Freeman, Garson, Gibson (Hamilton), Gilmour, Gould, Graham, Guthrie, Harcourt, Hardy, Leys, Lyon, McAndrew, McKay, McLaughlin, McMahon, Mack, Master, Morin, Mowat, Murray, Nairn, O'Connor, Pacaud, Pheips, Rayside, Robillard, Ross (Huron), Ross (Middlesex), Smith, Snider, Stratton, Widdifield, Wood (Brant)—50.

THE QUEBEC RESOLUTIONS.

Mr. G. B. SMITH resumed the debate on the conference resolutions. He said that when the Attorney-General had spoken clearly and impartially upon the resolutions he expected that the leader of the Opposition would act in the same spirit, and that his undoubted talents would be used in the service of the Province. But they found that once again the hon. gentleman had decided to put party before country. Unfortunately when he led off by assailing the resolutions indiscriminately, his followers were supposed

TO FALL INTO LINE.

Their great objection to the resolutions seemed to be that they did not emanate from Ottawa; that the representatives to the Federal Parliament were the only persons who had a right to discuss changes in the Constitution. If that contention were sustained, how could any change be brought about? Did anybody suppose that the Dominion Government would relinquish any of its powers—a Government which was constantly seeking to belittle the Local Legislatures and to trespass upon their jurisdiction. They might just as well

EXPECT THE OLD FAMILY COMPACT

to apply to the Imperial Parliament for a restriction of its own arbitrary powers. One gentleman on the opposite side had said that this House was only a big County Council. That was the first time he had ever heard such words spoken by a member in this House. The hon. gentleman had compared the action of the Legislature to that of municipalities applying to the Dominion Parliament for changes in their Constitution. A moment's thought would have shown the hon. gentleman that, while the municipalities were the creations of the Local Governments, the Local Governments were derived from the same source as the Dominion Government itself, and had an equal right to go to that source and ask for amendments to the Constitution. To say the Provinces had no right to agitate for such a change in the Act of Confederation as would enable its original object to be secured was an argument that could only be used by those who were blinded with partisan feeling. The hon. member claimed that the resolutions had

ALREADY HAD SOME EFFECT,

for he thought it was only reasonable to attribute to the agitation in connection with the veto question caused by the discussion of these resolutions the action of the Premier of the Dominion in calling the Ministers of Manitoba to Ottawa for conference on the disallowance question, and it was not improbable that the vetoing of the Red River Valley Railway Bill might be reconsidered. The resolutions would have other effects, too, and when they had been passed by nearly all the Local Legislatures of the country their weight would be such as to make itself felt at the next general election. The hon. gentleman referred to the financial aspect of the question and showed that Ontario had been considerably the

gainer. One gentleman had said that the veto power was required to check hasty legislation. Did not the people of this Province understand their own affairs? Was it generally observed that the Federal member for a constituency was a superior man to the representative for the Local House? On the other hand, the Dominion Parliament and Government contained a large number of men who knew and cared nothing about the affairs of Ontario. As to the Senate, he believed that the whole House was in favor of reforming it, and the only question was as to the manner of the reform. The change proposed by the resolutions was certainly

AN ENORMOUS IMPROVEMENT

upon the Senate as at present constituted. He contended that many of the resolutions which had been but little discussed were of great importance. He mentioned the resolution which sought to confirm to Ontario and other Provinces the right to their timber and minerals. That resolution might be of little moment to gentlemen who cared nothing for the interest of the Province, but they would find that it was of great interest to the people of Ontario. He hoped that before another Parliament hon. gentlemen opposite would take a different view of these matters. (Applause.)

It being six o'clock the Speaker left the chair.

After recess,

Mr. OSTROM resumed the debate. He opposed the Quebec resolutions, and claimed that the true Reformers of the country, those, he said, who had fought for responsible government, agreed with him rather than with the hon. members on the Government side of the House, and in support of his contention stated that he had been assured of this by one old Reformer, who had strongly condemned the proposal to allow the power of disallowance to revert to the Imperial Government.

Mr. MURRAY denied the truth of the charge of partisanship on the part of the members of the Government side of the House, claiming that the Attorney-General had made every effort to keep party feeling out of the debate, and that his efforts had been rendered fruitless immediately by the hon. gentleman who led the Opposition. The hon. leader of the Opposition had objected to the conference on account of certain elements in it which he considered objectionable, viz., the representatives of Quebec and Nova Scotia. The hon. gentleman (the Speaker) dealt with the objections of the hon. leader of the Opposition against these representatives, and claimed that they were groundless. However, apart from all this, he said, these resolutions would demand and would command the respect and attention of the House, not of one side but of both sides, even were they the outcome of no conference whatever and had emanated simply from the Attorney-General; for the position and character of that hon. gentleman were such that even then they would have had great weight, not only with the members of the House but with the country at large. Referring to the question of Senate reform, the hon. gentleman said he thought that the time had now arrived when the Senate should be abolished. He did not think the minorities required the protection of a Senate. He himself was one of the minority in this Province, but that minority had always been treated fairly. When an attack was made upon that minority during the last election it recoiled upon the heads of those who made it. He thought it was evident to the country that the resolutions of the conference were calculated to promote the peace and unity of the Dominion. (Applause.)

Mr. WOOD (Hastings) said he regretted that the House had to take the resolutions altogether or not at all. He had had hopes that they would have been considered seriatim, because there were several of those resolutions which he could most heartily have approved of, and by the present course he was prevented from doing so. He congratulated the Hon. Attorney-General upon the fair and impartial spirit in which he had introduced these resolutions. He allowed, and with pleasure, that the Attorney-General's speech had been throughout most conciliatory in tone, and so far as he could judge had carefully refrained from uttering a word to which hon. gentlemen on his side of the House could take exception on the ground of its containing an element of partisanship. His hon. friend the member for London (Mr. Meredith), however, during the course of his able speech on this matter, had seen fit to express a doubt as to the sincerity of the hon. the Attorney-General in his expression of a wish to avoid anything in the shape of partisanship. Personally he thought the hon. member for London had had no ground for such a charge, and regretted that it had been made. It had been left, however, to the hon. Minister of Education to introduce party politics and personalities into the debate as he had freely done in his attack on the leader of the Opposition,