

THE LEGISLATURE.

PROVINCIAL EXHIBITION GRANT DISCUSSED.

London to Get the Benefit of the Grant This Year, and After That No Place—An Interesting Discussion on Mr. Awrey's Resolution.

FEBRUARY 20, 1889.

This afternoon was taken up with the discussion of Mr. Awrey's resolution advocating the withdrawal of the Provincial grant to the Provincial Exhibition. As had been expected, a compromise was effected, and the grant will be made this year, and not subsequently, unless, as Mr. Waters predicted, the Province eventually returns to its old love, and spurning the corruptions of the side show, cries aloud for the old Provincial Fair.

The routine business was speedily disposed of.

FIRST READINGS.

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

To amend the Act respecting the federation of the University of Toronto and University College with other universities in the Province—Hon. G. W. Ross.

To provide for the extension of the water works of the City of St. Catharines and for other purposes—Mr. Garson.

To amend the Assessment Act—Mr. Bell.

To amend the Agriculture and Arts Act—Hon. Mr. Drury.

Respecting the Rideau Club—Mr. Monk.

To amend the Municipal Act—Mr. Lees.

Respecting the Town of Parkdale—Mr. Leys.

To protect the beaches and shores of the Province against depredation—Hon. Mr. Drury.

To incorporate the Village of Sundridge—Mr. Armstrong.

Respecting the reference of matters to arbitration—Mr. Connee.

Respecting Yorkville Loopline Railway Company—Mr. Leys.

To amend the Manhood Suffrage Act—Mr. Balfour.

To enable the Town of Brockville to raise certain debentures for drainage purposes—Hon. Mr. Fraser.

On motion of Hon. Mr. Fraser, the names of Messrs. Wood (Brant) and Craig were added to the Committee on Public Accounts.

THE PROVINCIAL EXHIBITION.

MR. AWREY MOVES HIS RESOLUTION TO ABOLISH THE GRANT.

Mr. Awrey then moved the resolution that has been standing in his name since the 1st January. The House was full and the resolution brought on quite an interesting debate. It was as follows:—

That this House, recognising that the Provincial Exhibition has in the past proved of no little service to the interests of agriculture; that the work it has hitherto done is now being more effectually done by the Exhibitions held in our large cities; that in view of the fact that the Provincial Exhibition has proved a financial failure year after year, aggregating a loss during the last seven years of no less a sum than ten thousand dollars, and that it meets each year with but indifferent support; that the large cities refuse to give to it their show grounds for Exhibition purposes; that property belonging to the Province, held in trust by the Board of Agriculture, has been mortgaged to meet yearly deficits; that the Board of Agriculture released a lien of four thousand dollars held upon the property of the Western Fair Association, and have agreed to give the association a grant of one thousand dollars in addition thereto for the privilege of holding their Exhibitions in the City of London every fourth year, and that such indications of the unpopularity of the Provincial Exhibition are not creditable to the Province—is of opinion that it would now be justified in refusing to give any further grants for the purpose of holding a Provincial Exhibition under the direction and management of the Board of Agriculture.

In speaking to his resolution, Mr. Awrey repudiated any lack of sympathy with or respect for those who had hitherto had the conduct of the affairs of the Provincial Exhibition. The action he was taking was not from any hostility to the members of the Agriculture and Arts Association, but from an honest conviction that the great good accomplished by the agency of the Exhibition in years past had been overcast by the disappointments of the past few years. He had made a careful study of the history of the Province in its connection with the history of the Provincial Exhibition. It

was a most interesting study. The growth of the Province was of a nature to reflect great credit upon the people of Ontario, and the origination and development of the Provincial Exhibition had been intimately connected therewith. The hon. member then proceeded to discuss the origin and growth of the Exhibition. This part of his speech was full of interesting facts and figures, and was treated in a very able manner. The first Exhibition was held in 1844, at the City of Toronto, and so scarce was then the stock of the Province, and so difficult the means of approaching Toronto, that the total of entries of exhibits amounted only to 1,150 in all classes, or less than the number of entries at the average successful township fair at the present time. The total expenditure was but \$1,100. The Exhibition was not aided by the Provincial Government, but was carried to a successful termination by money voted by the City of Toronto, supplemented by private subscriptions. Mr. Awrey gave a good idea of the interest taken in the Exhibition at the time, notwithstanding its meagre appearance in the light of subsequent successes, by quoting from contemporary journals a description of the manner in which people flocked in to it, coming from miles around, on foot, on horseback, in lumber wagons, and in every conceivable fashion. Then, taking the Exhibition year by year Mr. Awrey showed how it had grown in importance, and year by year with it the agriculture of the Province had been developed. Statistics were given to show the extraordinary increase of population, cultivated acres, horses, cattle, swine, etc. The increase of the prosperity of the Exhibition continued up to 1881, but, said Mr. Awrey, after that date its usefulness might be said to have gradually declined. He did not say that this was owing to the management in any way. It was their misfortune and due to the fact that the people of Ontario failed any longer to support the Exhibition. The hon. member showed that for the five years ending in 1887 there was an accumulated deficit of \$7,000 on the Provincial Exhibition. There was no question as to its being a financial failure. That argument might be met by the reply that if we were an educator were it not for the numerous other Exhibitions now held in the small as well as the great centres of population. The press of the Province, Mr. Awrey argued, was a unit against the continuance of the annual grant. The Exhibition was not welcomed anywhere. It had to beg its way from city to city and it was high time to put an end to it, only, seeing that use it once was to the Province, he wanted to see it die decently. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr. Bronson moved in amendment an addition asking that the sum hitherto devoted to the Provincial Exhibition should be divided among the annual fairs of London, Hamilton, Kingston and Ottawa.

The amendment was negatived without a division.

Hon. Mr. Drury had no fault to find with Mr. Awrey's general conclusions, but contented himself with pointing out that near the Government had contracted an agreement with the City of London, that was substantially that the Provincial Exhibition should be held there in the fall.

Under these circumstances the Government had placed \$10,000, as usual, at the disposal of the Board of Agriculture. Of this sum \$6,000 would be expended for purposes other than that of the Provincial Exhibition. Mr. Drury suggested the amendment

of the resolution so that it should not apply to the year 1889. Aside from this there was no objection to the resolution on the part of the Government. If the Exhibition had to be buried, let it be buried at London. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr. Awrey thought there was no reason why he should not accept the amendment if the facts were as stated by the Minister of Agriculture and allow the Exhibition to be held one year more and buried thus at London.

Mr. Bishop, whose name had been given as the seconder of the original resolution, rose at this point, and amid some ironical laughter from the Opposition, said he knew there was a "nigger in the fence" somewhere. He protested against Mr. Awrey's allowing his resolution to be changed, and said he would not take the responsibility of seconding it in its amended shape.

Thereupon Hon. Mr. Fraser moved, seconded by Hon. Mr. Drury, the amendment of the original resolution by taking out the words "would now be justified," in the latter part of the resolution, and substituting the words "will be justified in refusing after the present year."

Mr. Waters thought it would be better for the Provincial Exhibition to lie quiet, after the present year, for a while; but he was as firmly convinced as that he stood