

In February last I issued my proclamation declaring in force the "Rainy River Free Grants and Homesteads Act," and at a later period of the year I approved of an Order in Council appropriating under the Act twenty townships in that district for the purpose of free grants. I also issued a Commission to take evidence and report upon the claims of settlers along Rainy River. The Commissioners examined into and took evidence respecting numerous claims, and patents are being issued to such settlers as have performed the conditions of settlement. A Commission was also issued to investigate disputed claims to mining and other locations in Rat Portage and the territory contiguous thereto. Many claims were inquired into and much evidence was taken, and patents are being issued to applicants who have established their claims and complied with the conditions of sale.

The public interest in the mineral wealth of the Province continues to increase. The immense deposits of silver, iron, copper and nickel recently discovered or developed have attracted the attention of capitalists and others interested in mining in Europe and America. As a result large investments are being made in developing our mineral resources, and both capital and labor are finding remunerative employment in that connection. Measures relating to the sale of mining locations, and to regulate mining operations, will be presented for your consideration.

I am glad to know that the completion of two of the asylum cottages at Mimico, together with enlarged accommodation at the London Asylum, have permitted the removal of all those lunatics temporarily confined in the gaols of the Province who have been certified to be proper subjects for asylum treatment. Six cottages providing further accommodation for 350 patients are in course of construction, and will probably be completed during the present year.

Public attention has of late years been directed to the inadequate provision by county municipalities for the care and support of the aged, helpless and poor within their boundaries, only nine counties having yet availed themselves of the provisions of law authorising the establishment of Industrial Farms and Houses of Industry and Refuge in connection therewith. Organised philanthropy in the larger centres of population has provided institutions for the care of such persons in these localities; and Provincial aid to many of these institutions has been extended under our Charity Aid Act. With a view of encouraging the erection of County Houses of Refuge in connection with Industrial Farms, and of thereby relieving the gaols of this unfortunate class of their inmates, a measure will be submitted for your consideration providing for a grant from Provincial funds of a sum not exceeding four thousand dollars towards their cost, in every county or union of counties availing itself of the Act, the grant to be subject to such conditions as you may deem fitting. The bill will also provide for the case of counties which have already established a House of Refuge.

Your attention will be invited to the consideration of changes in the law relating to the assessment of property for the purpose of municipal taxation. Steps have been taken to procure a general expression of opinion from the various Municipal Councils and Boards of Trade throughout the Province on the vexed question of exemptions from local assessment, and a measure on this subject will be submitted, which will, I trust, meet with your approval.

Among other measures there will also be submitted for your consideration:—A bill to facilitate the speedy determination of important constitutional questions; a bill respecting the jurisdiction of the Court of Quarter Sessions in criminal cases; a bill for the further improvement of the liquor license laws; a bill relating to the licensing of cullers and the measurement of saw logs, and a bill respecting contagious diseases among horses.

The public accounts for the past year will be promptly laid before you. You will be pleased to learn that the expenditure has been kept within the amount granted, and that the revenue has exceeded the amount anticipated.

The estimates for the current year will, at an early date, be presented for your approval. They will be found to be framed with a due regard to economy and to the necessities of the public service.

I feel assured that your deliberations will, as hitherto, be characterised by wisdom and patriotism, and will conduce to the happiness and prosperity of the people.

First Business.

At the conclusion of the reading of the Speech from the Throne, the Lieutenant-Governor and party retired, and the House for a few minutes was in recess, which virtually amounted to a kind of reception held by the Attorney-General, to whom the majority of those present proceeded to pay their respects. Hand-shaking and smiles and good humor were the order of the day until about half-past three o'clock, when the Speaker returned and took the chair, though most of the visitors were still on the floor of the House.

Before the formal business of opening day was disposed of, the newest member of the House, and the latest representative of the Government's successes, Mr. Charles Mackenzie, the elected of West Lambton, was introduced by the Attorney-General and Mr. Freeman, the popular Liberal whip. Mr. Mackenzie gave the regulation shake to the Speaker, bowed, and retired to the seat given him on the back row of the Government side of the House. Then the remainder of the scanty business of the day was proceeded with.

A smile passed over the faces of members of the Opposition and a faint but jocular murmur of "No" was heard as the Attorney-General gave notice for the 18th time of the bill to administer the oath of office, etc., which was seconded by Hon. A. S. Hardy.

Then the Premier formally moved that the Speech that had just been delivered from the Throne be taken into consideration to-morrow (Friday), which proposition met with no objection.

The last of the formal motions was that for the appointment of a Committee to appoint the Standing Committees for the year, viz., on privileges and elections, private bills, standing orders, public accounts, printing and municipal law.

Then at 3.40 the Premier moved the adjournment of the House until to-day at three o'clock.