

THE ASSEMBLY.

Discussion of Mr. Wood's Ballot Bill.

VOTE ON THE SECOND READING.

Six Months' Hoist Carried by a Large Majority.

OTHER BUSINESS TRANSACTED.

Measure Relating to the Reforma- tory—The Public Accounts Committee—A Cor- rection.

March 12, 1890.

This was a field day for the Opposition, though they scored no victories. With slight interruptions they talked all day. The subject was the Ballot Bill introduced by Mr. A. F. Wood, and when the division took place at ten o'clock at night the Opposition was pretty well winded. Although they talked so long they really said very little that was new, the speeches consisting mainly of empty charges against the present system of voting by ballot and the depicting of the imaginary advantages to ensue by the adoption of the system advocated by Mr. Wood. An incident of the debate was the insinuation of Mr. Whitney that the Government had bidden its supporters hold their tongues, and that this was why they were not talking much, and the sharp and effective and entire repudiation of such an idea by Mr. Harcourt and subsequent speakers. The bill was defeated by the Government's big normal majority of 22, the vote being 54 to 32 in favor of the six months' hoist moved by the Attorney-General. The rest of the business of the day, excluding the introduction of an important bill concerning the Provincial Reformatory, was comparatively uninteresting, although quite a sharp debate and even a division took place on Mr. Creighton's bill to amend the Public Lands Act.

FIRST READINGS.

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

An Act with respect to fines and summary convictions—The Attorney-General.

To amend the Act respecting the establishment of municipal institutions in outlying districts—Mr. Lyon.

Respecting the culling and measurement of sawlogs—The Commissioner of Crown Lands.

Respecting the University of Toronto—Mr. McLaughlin.

To amend the Act respecting the spread of noxious weeds—Mr. Clancy.

An Act respecting contracts of life insurance—Hon. J. M. Gibson.

Respecting the Provincial Reformatory—Hon. A. M. Ross.

THIRD READING.

The following bill was read a third time and passed:—

Relating to the jurisdiction of Courts of General Sessions of the Peace—The Attorney-General.

LICENSE COMMISSIONERS' RETURNS.

Mr. Meredith moved for an order of the House for the return of a copy of the judgment pronounced by the Hon. Mr. Justice Robertson in an action in the High Court of Justice, wherein John J. Gosnell is plaintiff and Isaac Swarhout and others are defendants, and copies of all correspondence between the License Commissioners for the east riding of the County of Kent and the Provincial Secretary or any other member or officer of the Government on the subject of the granting of the licenses which were in question in the said action.

The order was allowed after a slight emendation of the motion at the suggestion of the Provincial Secretary.

WEST ALGOMA TIMEER.

Mr. Meredith moved again for an order of the House for a return showing the lots, townships or other area in the Electoral District of West Algoma, the timber of which has been sold, the dates when the same was sold, the names of the purchasers and the prices paid. Showing also what timber berths or other territory in the said district have been placed under license, or in respect of which permits to cut timber have been granted under the authority of the Province; the date when first placed under license, or permits first granted; the name of the original licensee or holder of the permit; the name of the present licensee or holder of the permit, and the bonus per square mile received for each such berth or other territory.

The order was granted.

THE BALLOT DEBATE.

The resumption of the adjourned debate on the second reading of Mr. A. F. Wood's bill to provide for the secrecy of the ballot at elections of members of the Legislative Assembly stood first among public bills and orders, and, according to agreement, it was taken up. Mr. Creighton had the floor, and he spoke at some length, his main effort being to show that the present system is not secret, but that the agent of the candidate, if present, as well as the deputy returning officer, sees both sides of the ballot paper and knows how the vote has been cast. He urged that the Government were getting into such a tangle in regard to

the matter that really for their own protection they ought to adopt Mr. Wood's bill.

The refrain was taken up by Mr. Willoughby, and continued in the usual strain by Messrs. Clancy, Ostrom and Blyth, who all strongly supported the bill, and urged the old and well-known arguments against the present system, which Mr. Clancy denounced as a conspiracy against the people.

Then there was a brief intermission, during which Mr. Murray opposed the bill and expressed his satisfaction at the present system. The Opposition, though almost exhausted, went at it again, and Mr. Whitney, Mr. French and Mr. Rorke, one after the other, urged what they held to be the defects of the present system. They were angry at no member of the Government side of the House rising, and at last an Opposition speaker told them they had been bidden to remain silent.

Mr. Harcourt at length relieved the monotony by making a bright, sharp speech on the other side. He warmly repudiated the insinuation that the Government had bidden its supporters keep silent. The man who suggested such a thing, he insisted, proved that he knew nothing of the true principles of Liberalism. Supporters of the Liberal Government were never bidden to speak or to remain silent on any question that came before them. He had had the honor of sitting in the House for twelve years, and never once to his knowledge had the Government suggested that its supporters should stay silent on any question. The hon. gentleman said all the speeches of the Opposition were based on a most unfair, vicious and false assumption, namely, that the officials of the Government wilfully went to work to do what they know to be wrong. That was the assumption on which all their arguments were based. He was surprised, he said, at so many members of the Opposition talking of purity of election. He was astonished that they cared to discuss the subject. Many members of the Opposition had admitted that an absolute secrecy of the ballot was impossible, yet they most viciously attacked the present system because it was not absolutely secret. Yet absolute secrecy was secured now if the officers did their duty, and he thought it unfair to assume that the officers would not do their duty. The question of secrecy of the ballot was in any case a matter that concerned only five per cent. of the population. Even a smaller percentage than that in fact, if the illiterate portion of the people and the blind were taken into account. He would vote for the bill if he believed any part of the people suffered injustice under the present law, or if he thought there was any advantage in respect to secrecy in the bill brought in by Mr. Wood over the present system. He taunted the Opposition with the record of the Conservative party, who, he said, had certainly not been in favor of secrecy of the ballot, and claimed that the bill would never have been so ardently advocated by hon. members opposite but for the bankruptcy of the Opposition, who had no legitimate ground of attack against the Government, and so were driven to this. If the leader of the Opposition ever crossed the floor of the House—a purely imaginative event—he prophesied that he would soon lose the radicalism that now possessed him, which was disguised under the name of Conservative, and under the responsibility of high executive office would speedily become a Conservative in the true sense of the word, one, namely, who would conserve all that which was good, and none of that which was bad. As to trusting the people, which the hon. members opposite said the Government were afraid to do, the charge was an absurd one. The Government did trust the people, and the people trusted the Government. They had trusted the head of the Government for the last 17 years, and would trust him for 17 years more if the Opposition continued its present policy.

Mr. Harcourt also drew attention to the fact that at two recent municipal elections in Toronto, had been asserted by a newspaper that the minority candidate had been elected Mayor, yet by the same journal it had been very clearly shown that had the election taken place under the Legislative ballot such an injustice would have been avoided.

Mr. Ingram denied the bankruptcy of the Opposition, threatened the Government with a four years' hoist in return for the 24 months' hoist which they intended to give this bill, and claimed that the Conservative party in Ontario had a better record than the Liberal as to

purity of election. Then, it being six o'clock, the Speaker left the chair, Mr. Metcalfe having the floor.

PRIVATE BILLS.

After recess, the House for a time was very thin, and though Mr. Metcalfe's arguments subsequently proved to be of similar texture, yet it was apparently thought unfair to allow him to get off his little jokes before so few members, and the House devoted a few minutes to private bills. Several of these were passed through the Committee stage, and then the following were read a second time:—

To incorporate the Huron & Ontario Railway Company—Mr. Ross (Huron).

To incorporate the Kent & Lambton Railway Company—Mr. Clancy.

To incorporate the Dunnville, Attercliffe & Smithville Railway Company—Mr. Harcourt.

To incorporate the Dunnville & Smithville Junction Railway Company—Mr. Harcourt.

To legalise the municipal election of the Village of Port Rowan—Mr. Freeman.

THE DEBATE RESUMED.

Then the debate was proceeded with. Mr. Metcalfe said nothing very striking, but, by a liberal use of slang and a flavor of fun, raised a few laughs, which is apparently what he aims at doing. He did remark, though, that he knew several men who would have voted for him, but they were afraid they would be found out and so did not vote at all. He said he strongly approved the bill, and he expressed the belief that the Government a year or two hence would enact just such a measure as that proposed.

Mr. Garson continued the debate, and made the best speech he has yet delivered in the House. He was subjected to several interruptions, and showed himself very ready in repartee and a very clever debater. He ridiculed the speeches of the Opposition, none of which he said had amounted to anything save that of the mover of the bill himself (Mr. A. F. Wood). They had really all amounted to the same thing, and there was little to