

THE ASSEMBLY.

The Question of the Price of School Text-Books

AGAIN DISCUSSED IN THE HOUSE.

The Government Policy Vigorously Defended.

GRANT FOR PROVINCIAL EXHIBITION.

Rights of Voters According to the Manhood Suffrage Act—Several Bills Advanced a Stage—Postponement of the Separate Schools Debate.

MARCH 19, 1890.

The proceedings in the Assembly to-day centred on the educational policy of the Government regarding the authorisation of text-books in use in High and Public Schools, the discussion being brought on by a motion of Mr. Preston, asking for a return of copies of the evidence taken before the arbitrators, in the year 1889, on the price of school text-books, with the award of the arbitrators thereon. The chief attack was made by Mr. Creighton, who spoke before six o'clock recess and afterwards. Vigorous speeches were made in defence of the policy of the Government by the Minister of Education, Mr. Harcourt, Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Stratton, and Hon. Mr. Hardy. The motion of Mr. Preston, as amended by Mr. Ross, carried, and the House adjourned at 11.40.

FIRST READINGS.

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

To amend the Act respecting snow fences—Mr. Master.

To amend the Registry Act—Hon. J. M. Gibson.

THIRD READINGS.

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

To enable the Metropolitan Bishop of the Church of England, in the ecclesiastical Province of Canada, to confer certain degrees in divinity.

To amend an Act to incorporate Huron College.

To amend the General Mining Act.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS.

Mr. Preston asked whether the grant for the Provincial Exhibition being abolished, what disposition is to be made of the \$6,000 placed in the estimates for the Agricultural and Arts Association, and what are the reasons why the Minister of Agriculture should not deal with the subject.

Hon. Mr. Drury read in reply the following minutes of the Agricultural and Arts Association:—

The Committee on Finance beg leave to recommend that the Association apply to the Legislature for the following sums to enable it to meet the expenditure for the year 1890:—

Prize farms.....	\$ 300
Salaries.....	300
Council expenses.....	750
Postage, express, etc.....	300
Printing.....	850
Fat Stock Show.....	800
Veterinary College.....	150
Ploughing matches.....	1,000

Mr. Ingram asked if the attention of the Government had been called to the doubts expressed as to the rights of voters whose names appear on the voters' lists without the letters "M. F." opposite them to vote. Is it the intention of the Government to propose any legislation designed to remove such doubts?

The Attorney-General replied that he was not aware that any difficulty took place under the Act. He had never heard that the purport of the Act was misconstrued, consequently the Government did not propose any legislation on the matter.

SCHOOL TEXT-BOOKS.

Mr. Preston asked for an order of the House for a return of copies of the evidence taken before the arbitrators in the year 1889 on the price of school text-books, with the award of the arbitrators thereon. Also, all correspondence on the subject of preparing or publishing school text-books, with statement of all sums paid in connection

school text-books, subsequent to that already brought down.

Mr. Preston made a lengthy address in support of his motion, in which he reviewed the policy of the Education Department since the appointment of a responsible Minister. He charged that there were too frequent changes in the use of text-books in the schools.

Hon. G. W. Ross, in prefacing his address, said that he had to reply annually to the resolution proposed by Mr. Preston. He explained that the policy during the Ryerson and Crooks regime was to provide the country with a variety of text-books. The same system is in vogue in England, Ireland and Scotland. California is the only State in the Union that could be quoted as having adopted the same policy as prevails Ontario. When he (Mr. Ross) assumed office he found that the country was opposed to the policy of issuing a series of readers. Some of the most prominent educationists in the Province favored a variety of text-books. Mr. Preston did not tell the House the new policy introduced by himself (Mr. Ross). In fact, he was rather unfair in that respect. His policy was to give the country such a system of text-books as would enable every parent to provide his children with school books at the lowest possible cost. The text-books (the readers) were so framed that they were generally adopted by all classes in the Province. The text-books had been prepared with a view of assisting the teacher to draw out the minds of the pupils without imposing an undue amount of memory work. That was particularly true of the history and geography text-books, and the result is that the whole system of teaching these subjects has been changed. The Department struck out on a new line. It was not true that the price of text-books had been increased, as could be shown by reference to the report issued by the Department on the subject. The Ontario text-books are much cheaper than those authorised in any of the States of the Union. At this stage Mr. Ross explained to the House the plan adopted by the Department in the preparation of text-books, and comparing that plan with that in vogue in California, where a single series of readers was in vogue, he was able to show that the Ontario readers, in style, illustrations and general make-up, were superior and much cheaper than those issued by the Education Department of that State. The arbitrators appointed by the Department did not give it as their opinion that the Ontario text-books were too costly. They examined the leading publishers in the city, and after mature deliberation they were only able to recommend that the drawing books should be reduced in price. They unanimously declared, after hearing expert evidence, that the price of the text-books was as low as consistent with the profits of the publishers. It would be a matter of gratification to the House to know that a large number of the Ontario Public School text-books were adopted by many publishers in other countries. Indeed the Education Department frequently received commendations of their books from leading educationists in England and from all over the American Continent. The publishers were responsible for

the taking of the evidence before the Board of Arbitrators with closed doors.

Mr. Ross concluded by saying that he had no objection to the first part of the motion, and he moved that the motion, as in that way constructed, be substituted for that of Mr. Preston.

Mr. Creighton followed the Minister of Education. He quoted from the journals of the House to show that the Government were, previous to Mr. Ross' assumption of office, in favor of a double set of school readers. He charged that the Minister of Education was disingenuous in the comparisons he made as to the price of text-books. In his estimation, the retail price of school books was not as low as the circumstances of the country demanded. Mr. Creighton had an armful of the text-books on his desk, and holding out one dramatically, he was silenced by a chorus of voices demanding him to read. It being 6 o'clock, the Speaker at this stage left the chair.

PRIVATE BILLS.

After the six o'clock adjournment the House went into Committee of the Whole on private bills. The following were reported, Mr. Harcourt presiding:—

Respecting certain allowances for wards in the Township of Winchester—Mr. Whitney.

Respecting the old cemetery and the Methodist cemetery in the Town of Sarnia—Mr. Mackenzie.

To consolidate the debt of the Township of Wallace—Mr. Hess.

Respecting the City of London—Mr. Meredith.

To enable the City of Brantford to issue debentures for drainage, water, school and park purposes—Mr. Hardy.