

New Mining Policy Laid Before the House.

THE PRINCIPLES FOLLOWED.

Mr. Willoughby's Attack on the License System.

Mr. Harcourt's Defence—Mr. Mowat's Vigorous Speech—Many Bills Advanced a Stage—Deputations.

TORONTO, April 8.

In the Legislature to-day much business was done. The session is now at its height. All the important legislation is before the House, the committees are hard at work and the sittings of the House are marked by great interest.

Amendments to the Mining Laws.

The first matter engaging the consideration of the House was the introduction by the Hon. Mr. Hardy of three bills to amend the mining laws of the Province. In introducing these measures the Commissioner did not at the present stage go into the changes proposed at great length. He should not, he said, make any observations of an extensive character, but would merely state in brief in what direction the general policy tended. These measures were a bill to amend the Mining Act, a bill to amend the Public Lands Act, and a bill to amend the act relating to mineral lands, entitled the Mining Claims Act. The latter was a measure introduced and carried through the second reading last session with some changes and some amendments which were extremely important—amendments which it struck the Government might well be made, and which had been asked for in behalf of the mining interests. As regards the bill to amend the Public Lands Act the amendments proposed might be briefly stated as follows:—

(1) That the Government shall not too readily part with the ownership of their public lands without receiving some adequate consideration for the general uses of the Province, and that when sold it shall be for the bona fide purpose of mining rather than for speculative purposes:—(2) To secure as early and rapid a development of the lands which may be sold as possible. (3) To secure a revenue to the Province, first, by the sale or rental of the lands; second, from the actual workings of the mines by way of royalty. It is sought to secure these ends:—(a) By fixing a higher price for the land when sold, and (b) by requiring development within a limited time. (4) To introduce the option of leasehold at an annual rent instead of a grant in fee simple, thus retaining the fee in the Crown. (5) In making grants of lands for agricultural purposes, to retain the ownership of the minerals in the Crown. (6) The establishment of a Bureau of Mines and the appointment of a director of mines.

With reference to the latter proposal the Government had had under consideration the recommendations of a somewhat representative mining convention which assembled recently in the city, and they had considered that it was probably not at the present moment practicable to enlarge the Cabinet—to enlarge the membership of the Government by adding to it another Minister, as recommended by that body. There might be arguments in favor of that presented no doubt forcibly by the convention, but the convention perhaps considered less the general public and the general question of what would be for the advantage of the country than simply the one of what would

be, in their opinion, conducive to the rapid development of the mining interest. Then it could not be forgotten that there was a difference of view amongst the mining delegates themselves who met to discuss this question. Whatever might be said of enlarging the Government, it was too serious a question to be gone into rapidly. He moved, seconded by the Hon. Mr. Ross, the first reading of the bills he had named.

Mr. Meredith was anxious to know what the position of director of mines was to be, and what was to be the nature of his office.

Hon. Mr. Hardy replied that he would have charge of the Mining Bureau and would possess the powers of mining inspector. He would necessarily be a man who was conversant with mining matters, and would probably require a mining inspector. There had been one last year, but he had only had an uncertain and fragmentary amount of work to do. The mining inspector would not be likely to receive a very large salary. The director's salary would be equivalent to that of a deputy head of a department. The office would probably, for the time being, have to be connected with the Department of Crown Lands. The bills were then read the first time.

Consolidation of Municipal Law.

Mr. Dack inquired whether it was the intention of the Government during the forthcoming recess to take any steps for the consolidation of the Municipal Act and the Assessment Act.

The Attorney-General in reply enumerated the various consolidations that had been made in the municipal laws, the last one having taken place in 1887; and he was sorry to say that each session there was a considerable number of amendments. He would have the greatest satisfaction in preparing a consolidation act now if he could at all expect that the amendments would cease for a number of years. All he could say was that the question of amendment would be considered during the recess.

Licensing Returns.

A considerable portion of the afternoon was spent in discussing the licensing system. Mr. Willoughby moved for an order of the House for a return giving a tabulated statement showing the license districts:—

“(1) The gross amount collected in each license district for (a) fees for licenses, (b) fees for transfers, (c) fees for removals, (d) fines, (e) mileage, (f) costs. (2) The amount expended in each license district for the following purposes:—(a) Inspectors' salaries, (b) commissioners' travelling expenses, (c) postage and stationery, (d) printing, (e) advertising, (f) fees and disbursements of counsel, (g) fees in unsuccessful cases, (h) fees in cases of conviction where amounts not collected, (i) detective service, (j) other costs, (k) expenses re transfers and removals, (l) sundry expenses. (3) The proportion of the license fund to which the municipalities comprising each license district were entitled, and the amounts which were actually paid to them. Such return to be for each year since and including the license year ended the 30th April, 1877, to and including that ended the 30th April, 1890.”

He had, he said, moved for a return of this kind two years ago, and with reference to his own district, East Northumberland, he had submitted a motion for a return. The return was given, but it did not contain the information that he had asked the House to order, and in this connection he opined that all information in the public interest should be given by officials freely. Some information had been given, but not in a form which could be readily understood. With regard to the first part of his motion, the amount collected in each license district had been given very indistinctly, and as regards fees for transfers and removals there was no report. He had the same charge of a want of definiteness to allege against the returns of the amounts expended in each licensing district. With regard to the position of the licensing fund the Treasurer in his budget speech had given