

paid by salaries, the advantage was on the side of the fee system. There was evidence that the public was better served under the fee system. It was easy to talk at random on the subject. The hon. gentleman had referred to the feeling in the country on the subject on the occasion of his former motion, and had blamed him for speaking of the exaggerations of newspapers. Well, there were such exaggerations. It was a habit among the Opposition newspapers at the time to publish the gross receipts of the different offices as the salaries of the holders of these offices, taking no note at all of the disbursements. Of course the figures purporting to be the incomes were such as could not be defended. The hon. gentleman had stated a number of facts, and he had himself stated other facts. The public were in possession of most of the facts in the case.

Mr. Meredith—Has the commission been issued yet?

The Attorney-General—Not yet, but we hope to have the report before the general elections, and possibly before the House closes. The Attorney-General then referred to a statement by Mr. Wood that the County Crown Attorney of Hastings had made excessive charges for work in connection with his office. The charge, said Sir Oliver, was in accordance with the statute, and not excessive. He corrected the previous speaker on another point where he had erred in stating the receipts of an office, and closed by saying he would not follow him into the many other statements he had made, and which really had no special bearing on the case. He wanted, however, to say definitely that the Government was not saying that these salaries could not be reasonably reduced. That was a matter of opinion. All that I do say, said Sir Oliver, is that the fee system is the best system for the public, the course that secures the most efficient work, and the course that is most economical, as experience shows. So far from saving the Province anything like \$250,000, as the hon. gentleman says, if we were to adopt the system which he advocates it would be a very heavy charge upon the treasury from that time. (Ministerial applause.)

Mr. Whitney rose to reply, but it being within a few minutes of 6 o'clock, the Speaker left the chair.

AFTER RECESS.

Mr. Whitney resumed the debate when the Speaker resumed the chair. He began with a reference to the serious consideration needed by the subject. It was no new matter. Ten or twelve years before Mr. Meredith introduced a resolution providing for the election of Registrars. He was surprised at the anger with which the Attorney-General had received the manner of bringing the matter up. Mr. Meredith and Mr. Wood had brought the matter up by resolution, and had been met by amendments. There had been due warning given by Mr. Meredith in his speech on the reply to the speech from the throne, and they had a right to put the matter in a form which required a square vote. Mr. Whitney then argued strongly for the abolition of the fee system, and the election of officials. The feeling was growing throughout the country, and the Government of Ontario must take notice of it. Why should officers whose duties were mechanical receive payment by fees? Why should a man get more who registers 500 deeds than one who registers 5,000 deeds? The work does not demand great intelligence. As a proof, the Deputy Registrars of the Province are a capable, well-informed set of men, and yet not one of them in the rural districts receives a salary that would indicate that he is a man of great executive ability. Often Registrarships have been vacant for years, with the deputy giving perfectly satisfactory service. He thought the rural population was now intelligent enough to be entrusted with the choosing of the officials. They would know who was deserving, who needed such a position, and would appoint deserving men at salaries of \$500, \$600 or \$700, as the case might be. There would be no more of the unseemly strife for positions which is now so painfully apparent. Mr. Whitney then assailed the appointment of the commission in vigorous terms, charging that the Attorney-General, "the greatest constitutional lawyer of civilization," and his six "satellites" were unable to decide the knotty point, and had to appoint a commission, as in the case of the dehorning of cattle. This commission was to deal with all foreign countries, and yet was to have its report ready before the end of the session. He was tempted to ask if the report was not in type. Who would be on the commission? Would the poor, despised, down-trodden, persecuted farmer Minister be one of the commissioners? Or would the members be some of those who by some unwritten law are the pensioners of Ontario? They might not get a fair answer to the question there, but they would appeal with full confidence to the people.

HON. GEO. W. ROSS.

Hon. Mr. Ross complimented Mr. Whitney on the oratorical graces with which he had adorned this acute case. All the cases which the Opposition brought forward were acute; were for the moment the most important cases on the tapis. The surplus, the biennial session, Government House, and now the fee system, each had its turn of being absolutely essential to the welfare of the country. Was not Mr. Whitney working up his imagination? Was he absolutely certain of the need of the change? The Opposition was terribly afraid of amendments; they seemed to think it was very wrong for the

Government to do such things. He would tell his friends opposite that they on the Government side would move all the amendments they chose. They were perfectly within their parliamentary rights in doing so, and he could not see why they should not use their Parliamentary privileges. What a bloodthirsty gladiator his friend across the floor was in his desire to fight the question out squarely. How determined he was on settling the question then and there. Mr. Whitney asserted that the fee system was unbusinesslike. Did he not belong to a profession that was paid by fees? Were not doctors paid by fees? Were not many businessmen paid by commissions? Was not piece-work a fee system? It was just that the man who used the office should pay for its maintenance, rather than that the taxpayer who used the office only three or four times in his life should pay taxes for it. The few who do use the office should pay for it; not the multitude who do not. As for the elective system, Mr. Whitney had spoken of the present incumbents as pensioners. He must settle for that offensive phrase with the many respectable citizens whom he had thus insulted. Would the poor man be elected, as Mr. Whitney fancied? All know the turmoil and labor of a public election; what chance would the poor man have in one? The curse of the ward-heeler would be brought in by the system proposed. How many elected officials have fled from the United States in the last few years? They were elected; they paid the price; they repaid themselves, and they fled. The adoption of that system would prepare the way for an inundation of elective officials. Police Magistrates and County Judges would be elected. He warned the Opposition against the fatuous course in which they were embarking of adopting a policy of Americanizing Canadian institutions. He hoped the time would never come when a Judge elected by corrupt methods would try offenders, and a County Crown Attorney have to prosecute the ward-heeler who had helped him to office.

Mr. Whitney—They do it now.

Hon. Mr. Ross—Specify the charge. It is a gross accusation.

Mr. Whitney—I will when I am ready.

Hon. Mr. Ross, continuing, said that such a course would degrade Ontario from her present proud position of pre-eminence in impartiality of judicial tribunals. It was paving the way for communism and socialism that would sweep away the bulwarks of the courts. The present system was not unsatisfactory. How many appointed officials were untrue to their trust? Only vague hints could be got from the Opposition. He challenged the Opposition to prove incapability on the part of Ontario Government officials. Then, the amendment introduced was vague. It did not declare either for popular election or for municipal appointment. As for the latter, without assailing Municipal Councils, he would point out that in twenty years only \$15,000 have been lost through appointed officials, while \$273,000 have been lost by officials appointed by Municipal Councils. A Government that has done so well should not have its power of appointment taken away from it and given to the municipalities. As for unseemly strife, what sort of strife would there not be for an office worth \$2,000 or \$3,000 a year, that was open to election? The gentlemen opposite made no suggestion to elect postmasters, custom house officers, inspectors of weights and measures, or excise officers. That would reduce Dominion patronage. Their shield had two sides. He objected to the amendment, because it was untrue in saying that the system is unsatisfactory, and because it was artful in not declaring what it really favored. There was much whistling to keep their courage up on the part of the Opposition, but the Government would go to the country, appealing not to class, creed or section, but to the business sense, to the conscience, and to the intelligence of the country. (Cheers.)

MR. MEREDITH.

Mr. Meredith replied to Mr. Ross. He defended the manner in which the amendment had been brought forward by the Opposition. It was quite parliamentary and not an innovation in the Legislature. He denied that the Opposition were seek-