

Hon. Mr. Bronson's Course
Criticized by Mr. Wood.

A Motion on the Ballot System Intro-
duced by Mr. Whitney—Government
Measures Advanced a Stage.

Legislative Chamber, March 27.

The House did a variety of business today, but that of greatest interest was the debate on the ballot question raised by Mr. Whitney's amendment to the motion to go into supply. Mr. A. F. Wood, on the presentation of the railway report at the opening of the House, took objection to the action of the Chairman of that committee during its session in the morning. When the Toronto & Richmond Hill bill was under discussion he had compelled a vote to be taken in a particular way that was not desired by the committee. He had put a motion in the way it suited him and not in the customary way. In putting to vote the preamble of the bill he had added the words "subject to the Attorney-General's approval." This, Mr. Wood contended, was most unusual, unfair and arbitrary on the part of the Chairman. It prevented the committee taking a fair vote on the principle of the bill.

Hon. Mr. Bronson, as Chairman of the committee, defended his action. The course of action he had pursued was not a new one. He had followed it before in the committee. It was necessary the matter should be referred to the Government. If the preamble had been carried instead of defeated there would have been every reason for the approval of the Attorney-General being secured, seeing the legal and other complications that had surrounded it.

Mr. Clancy said such a course as the Chairman had pursued would bring the committee into disrepute and make them mere mouthpieces of the Chairmen.

Hon. Mr. Gibson said the course taken by Hon. Mr. Bronson was one he had often taken without objection from any one as Chairman of the Private Bills Committee. A matter had often been left in abeyance by a committee until the Chairman, who was responsible for the direction of the committee and for the report to be presented, had consulted the Government. In this case the bill had been rejected, as had the preamble, and he could not understand why there was any difficulty or objection on the part of Mr. Wood.

Mr. Whitney condemned the course pursued as irregular.

Hon. Mr. Hardy said it was the natural and reasonable way. The complaint of the Opposition was for no other reason than that the minority had not prevailed.

Mr. Davis, who was present all through the committee meeting, endorsed Hon. Mr. Bronson's action, and said he had not been unfair or arbitrary. He had realized his responsibility as Chairman, and had taken into account the complications that surrounded the bill.

The subject then dropped and the House proceeded to business.

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS.

After the first reading of a number of

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bills, Hon. Mr. Fraser moved the second reading of his bill respecting the site of the new Legislative and Departmental buildings. He said the bill simply carried out the intention of the original act which provided for the erection of the new buildings, and called for little explanation. It simply confirmed the order in Council already passed on the subject. Briefly speaking, the site was the land lying between the lines of St. Alban's and Grosvenor streets and comprising nine or ten acres. Old members of the House would recollect that the City of Toronto in 1836 entered into an agreement with her Majesty, selecting this site for the purpose for which it had been set apart.

Mr. A. F. Wood, in recognition of Hon. Mr. Fraser's rare appearance in the House, now took the opportunity to congratulate the hon. gentleman on being in his place to move the bill, and said he voiced the feelings of the Opposition generally when he expressed the hope that he would move many more bills. (Opposition applause.)

The bill was read a second time and then, at Mr. Fraser's request, put through committee.

The House then went into committee on various Government measures. Mr. Gibson's bill respecting mortgages and sales of personal property was amended in some details and reported. Mr. Hardy's bill for the establishment of Rondeau Park was then considered. There were no amendments of any importance, but in the section providing for the destruction of liquor held for sale in the park, at the suggestion of Mr. Clancy, the qualification "held for sale" was taken out. Mr. Ferguson, who shares with Mr. Clancy the honor of representing Kent, and in whose constituency the park is situated, had already secured the insertion of a clause prohibiting the issuing of a liquor license to any house within a mile of Rondeau Park.

These measures were also considered in committee. To facilitate the administration of justice in the Rainey River District, and to extend the power of the High Court in respect of granting maintenance to infants, both bills in the care of the Attorney-General.

THE BALLOT.

At 5.30 o'clock Mr. Harcourt moved the House into Committee of Supply, whereupon Mr. Whitney rose and moved the time-honored amendment objecting to the present ballot law of Ontario as being not secret, and advocating what is known as the Australian ballot system in its place.

Speaking to his motion, Mr. Whitney traced briefly the history of the introduction of the ballot into free countries generally. The only object, he said, of a ballot was that it should allow secret voting. The ballot in use in Ontario, he argued, did not allow this. The ballots used were numbered, and the numbers corresponding with numbers on the list, identification became possible, and it was possible to tell how any given man had voted. Such identifications had frequently taken place, and had been mentioned in the House. The ballot advocated by his side of the House was in use in several Provinces of Canada, several States of the United States, and several countries of Europe. On the other hand, the Attorney-General had quoted the other day countries in which the present system prevailed. The Attorney-General had defended the system because it was identical with that used in England. That was not a sufficient defence of it. We might as well, he said, advocate primogeniture or a House of Lords for Canada because they existed in England. We might as well have a national debt for Ontario, he said, because England had one, and added that he would give the Attorney-General credit for doing his best to create one. But the ballot used in England caused great dissatisfaction there, and Mr. Whitney quoted from pamphlets and articles on the subject to corroborate this statement. In Ontario, he claimed, there was great dissatisfaction in regard to the present law. The attempts at remedial legislation made by the Government showed that this was recognized by them, though they would not admit it. No harm could possibly come from the introduction of the system advocated by himself. There was no weight in the objections offered against it. The Attorney-General was guardian of the public morals of the Province, and the people had a right to look to him for action that would befit his position; yet

he had frequently been long behind other countries in introducing measures, which he had eventually brought forward, and which have become law. The measures have come finally, and he hoped that, on the same principle, eventually this measure also would become law.

It being 6 o'clock, the Speaker left the chair when Mr. Whitney concluded his speech.