

SESSIONAL CLERKS.

The sum of \$124,300 for legislation was then considered in detail. Mr. Marter took exception to the item of \$12,000 for sessional writers, messengers, etc., though the same as that voted last year. Mr. Marter referred to evidence brought out in the public accounts, and claimed it showed that many of the sessional clerks were incompetent and unnecessary. He thought their headquarters were nothing but a hospital for the halt, the main and the blind. He said it was time to call a halt. The expenditure in this direction was enormously greater during the last twelve years than during the twelve years preceding.

Hon. Mr. Harcourt replied that Mr. Marter's language would lead one to suppose that it was the Senate to which he was referring. He explained that the excess of 1893 was due to the hurry consequent upon the removal to the new buildings, and would not be likely to occur again. He ran over the names of a number of sessional writers working in the buildings, many of whom have been for several years connected with important committees and departments, and men of the most undoubted efficiency. He then gave some illustrations of the enormous work which has to be performed by the writers in connection with the orders of the House for returns from the different localities. These involved a vast amount of correspondence, collation and tabulation. Those who had followed the evidence in the public accounts of Mr. Spence and Mr. Robertson, who had charge of the clerks, would know there was nothing stated there to sustain Mr. Marter's charge of incompetency. Quite the reverse. They had shown that there was work for all the writers, and that they were competent for their work. If there were a few who were not exactly good penmen, there was plenty of other work for them to do, as had been very clearly shown in committee.

Mr. Meredith deprecated the large expenditure on sessional writers. These men were appointed merely as friends of the Government. He knew for a fact that some of them did absolutely no work at all. He thought the argument that the removal of the new buildings had caused an increase in the number of sessional writers must surely have been made without reflection.

Hon. Mr. Hardy explained that 1893 was in many respects an abnormal session. The number of returns was very large, and entailed an enormous amount of labor. The work connected with the moving up, with the filling of the vaults and other similar duties, was very great. Part of it was done by the writers. There has been a great decrease this year, having begun the session with 39 writers, and having gone up only to 47. As for Mr. Marter's remarks about the lame, the halt and the blind, he could not see why a citizen who had been unfortunate, but who still was able to discharge the duties required of him, should not be employed as well as a more able-bodied man. The remark simply illustrated the unworthy treatment to which every employee of the Province had to submit.

After some further remarks, Hon. Mr. Harcourt said that in Ottawa there are 272 sessional writers. He emphasized the uncertainty of the work, and the impossibility of laying it out regularly; if the work were more constant fewer employees would suffice.

AFTER RECESS.

After recess the debate on the vote for the sessional writers was continued. Dr. Willoughby spoke, referring to the gifts, sometimes of money, which Mr. Alex. Robertson, foreman of the sessional writers, had admitted having received. Hon. Mr. Harcourt in reply assured the House that the fact had been absolutely unknown to him until elicited in the Public Accounts Committee, and admitted that it would diminish his usefulness if it were allowed to continue. As for the remarks as to the excessive number of writers, there were times when the full number was needed.

Mr. Marter followed, urging that an example should be made of these officials caught in wrong-doing. The whole system of sessional writers was bad.

Hon. Mr. Hardy remarked that there is a tendency among employees everywhere to subscribe for presents to their superiors, a tendency which he could not understand, and which in this case was certainly wrong. It would not, he thought, occur again.

Mr. White spoke, complaining of the excessive number of the writers. In the course of his remarks he mentioned with especial severity the name of Mr. S. Griffin, whose name he saw down in the public accounts as a "clerk," and whose salary was \$750. Who was this apparently useless gentleman?

Amid general laughter Hon. Mr. Hardy rose and explained to the member for North Essex that he was assailing the salary of the private secretary which the House had a year or two before voted to Mr. Meredith. Mr. White did not continue the discussion.

It was then proposed by the Government to go on to consider the educational frame but Mr. Meredith objected to going on to this without preparation, and, in deference to his wishes, consideration of the items was deferred.

The vote for administration of justice was then taken up, and on the item of \$7,753.59 for the Supreme Court of Judicature, Mr. Meredith urged that there could be much amalgamation effected in Osgoode Hall, with a corresponding saving in salaries. Many of the offices attached to the different courts could be thrown together as vacancies fell in. He especially alluded to the office recently vacated by the death of Mr. Baldwin. Surely the duties connected with this office could be discharged by some of the other officials in the Hall.

Sir Oliver Mowat said that this was the first time he had heard this suggestion. He could see no amalgamation necessary. There was plenty of work for all the courts, which might just as well be called first, second, and so on, courts, as well as Queen's Bench, Chancery or Common Pleas. The old names had really been retained through affection, but all the courts were fully occupied.

Mr. Meredith thought that as vacancies occurred reductions and rearrangements could be effected and much expense saved. Mr. Whitney spoke along the same lines.

Mr. Meredith criticized the item of \$23,612 for Surrogate Judges and local Masters. He claimed the basis of commutation was unfair, and the amounts received now were much too large. The Government should cut them down.

The Attorney-General said the commutation had been effected on the basis of the fees for a number of years prior to the commutation, which was thought to be a fair basis. It had not been expected that the fees would increase. He did not think there was any grievance. The present system under commutation was better than payment by fees to judicial officers.

Mr. Whitney asked the Attorney-General if he thought a committee should not be appointed to investigate the question.

The Attorney-General said he did not see why a commission should not be appointed.

The votes for miscellaneous criminal and civil justice, for Division Courts inspection and for miscellaneous justice came up next. Under this head Mr. Meredith called attention to the emoluments of the shorthand reporters of the courts, which he thought too high. Suitors were, he said, often put to excessive expense to get copies of the evidence.

The Attorney-General said that the suggestions recently made to the Judges by members of the profession contained no mention of this matter, and he could not see how it could be remedied, as the cause lay in the great length of verbatim reporting. It was a question whether public sentiment was not ripe for the expense for this being met out of the exchequer, instead of as at present. Mr. Garrow mentioned a case of what he considered an excessive charge for four days' evidence.

Mr. White called attention to the large proportion borne by the Province towards the maintenance of the Police Magistrate and the administration of justice on the Niagara River as compared with the amount paid for the administration of justice on the Detroit River. The Attorney-General replied that the circumstances on the Niagara River are exceptional, the whole line of the river having to be covered.

REGISTRAR COYNE.

At this point (about 10 o'clock) Hon. Mr. Hardy read a telegram which he had sent that afternoon to Registrar Coyne, immediately upon hearing the charge of Mr. McColl that that official did not attend to his duties, but simply slipped down to the office for a few minutes each day. He regretted Mr. McColl was not now in his place. The telegram he had sent read as follows:—

J. H. Coyne, Esq., St. Thomas:

McColl states that you only step down to the office once a day for a little while about noon, and that the deputy and his assistant do nearly all the work. How is this, and how many hours a day are you in the office? Answer by letter. A. S. Hardy.

Mr. Coyne instead of replying by letter telegraphed as follows:—

Hon. A. S. Hardy: Am at office every forenoon and afternoon, with hardly an exception, frequently there until 5 or 6 o'clock. I spend four to five hours every day in the office; was there six hours today. Whole work always done under my personal supervision. Am familiar with every detail. The deputy—unacquainted with the work when first employed—has been instructed in every detail by me, and acts under my personal direction every day. All important correspondence is conducted, and every important abstract verified, by me personally. I, of course, do not copy instruments; that would be impossible; but the copying, as well as the deputy's work, is supervised by me. Mr. McColl must have been strangely misinformed; the work was never more thoroughly done, or more satisfactorily, as far