# Sir Oliver's Bill to Settle Industrial Disputes.

## IT WILL NOT BE COMPULSORY

## Hon. Geo. W. Ross Discusses His Department.

**The House in Committee of Supply Much of the Afternoon and Evening —Estimates Considerably Advanced.**

Legislative Chamber, April 3.

The House put in a good deal of hard work to-day, the net result of which is the advancement of a number of Government measures and the passage of a batch of the estimates. The most important Government bill advanced was that for the settlement of industrial disputes, which was read a second time, after a very able speech from the Attorney-General in exposition of the main features, and a douche of cold water from Mr. Meredith and Mr. A. F. Wood, who were inclined to think it would not do any good, but did not venture to oppose it. The Attorney-General dwelt at some length upon the fact that the award of the arbitrators is to be optional, and not compulsory, with the disputing parties, experience in other countries having shown this to be the wiser course. A good portion of the afternoon and the whole of the evening were given up to the estimates, the feature of the proceedings being a couple of elaborate and comprehensive statements on behalf of their respective departments by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Agriculture. The redistribution bill, which it was thought would possibly have been brought down to-day, was not ready, but will likely be brought down in a few days.

### MINOR GOVERNMENT BILLS.

The House then went into committee on some minor Government bills, the following being put through committee:—The bill respecting allowances to the Supreme Court Judges, bill respecting certain duties of Coroners, and the bill to make further provision respecting the solemnization of marriages. All three were in charge of the Attorney-General. The last-named bill was amended in such a way as to require the written consent of the parents or guardians of a person contracting to marry when that person is under eighteen. As first drawn the bill placed the age at twenty-one. The bill respecting duties of Coroners had a section added providing that in cases where a Coroner is in any way interested in or connected with the parties who seek exculpation from any blame in connection with the death of the person on whom the inquest is being held he may not preside at such inquest.

### INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.

The Attorney-General moved the second reading of his bill respecting councils of conciliation and arbitration for settling industrial disputes. Everybody, he said, desired the friendly settlement of disputes between employers and workmen. Workmen resorted to strikes as their only resource when not justly treated. In the same way employers sometimes resorted to lockouts as a retaliatory measure. As a consequence the public sometimes suffered greatly. Attempts had been made from time to time to get these difficulties settled. One important step with a view to having such troubles amicably settled was to induce the two parties in some way or other to come together on equal terms. Sometimes this could be done, but sometimes the two parties started each with an ultimatum which prevented their having any friendly conferences. The bill now submitted was formed on that passed in New South Wales, after very full inquiry into the legislation of different countries. It did not contain any thing of importance that was new. The same act had become law elsewhere and produced discussion elsewhere. It was the most complete law of the kind that had been passed, and therefore he had thought it would be well to embody it in the statutes of Ontario. It had been already adopted in British Columbia. In that Province there had been a proposal to change the bill in one important respect, but the Government responsible for it had concluded that it would not be safe to make the change. The act as passed by those countries was merely permissive, and did not provide any means of enforcing the conclusions arrived at. At first thought it would seem that the bill would therefore fail of its purpose, and in British Columbia it had been attempted to provide that the conclusions of the Board of Arbitration should be enforcible, just as the conclusions of any other Board of Arbitration were, but it had been decided against making the change in question. In England there were at present three acts of Parliament having the same end as that of this bill to some extent in view, where the conclusions were enforcible, and they were all practically dead letters, simply because of this very provision to enforce the decisions arrived at. Neither employers nor employed appeared to be willing to bind themselves to accept decisions that might be against them. In Ontario also there was an act which the late Mr. Crooks had carefully prepared, but had prepared before knowing what was the experience in other countries. That law provided for a tribunal chosen equally by the two parties to the dispute. It only bound those who had previously agreed to be bound, but in those cases the decision was enforcible. He was not aware this act had ever been made use of. Certainly it had been very seldom used. On inquiry why this was so he was told, no doubt correctly, because it agreed with the experience of other countries, that it was because of this provision for enforcement. The only law of the kind in the United States was that in the State of Massachusetts, where it had done much good. It did not provide for enforcement. The acceptance of the conclusions was purely voluntary. It was found, however, as a matter of fact, that both employers and employed very seldom refused to obey such an award. It was to be taken for granted that the awards would be fair and reasonable, giving to neither party all they wanted, yet being such as both parties might accept. Another thing, public opinion would be very hostile to a disregard of the awards in these cases, and the force of public opinion in such matters is very great. Sir Oliver Mowat then briefly explained the provisions of the bill. Each of the two parties to a dispute, with certain limitations, would choose two arbitrators and these would name their Chairman from among themselves. It would be the duty of these to endeavor to bring the parties to the dispute to an agreement or compromise. If they failed to do this, then the dispute would come before the general Council of Arbitration, which the bill proposed to create. Either party might apply to have this done, but it might be done with one party dissenting. The Council of Arbitration, however, having come to a conclusion, it was still left to the honor, good faith and sense of expediency of the parties to the dispute to decide whether or not they would accept this conclusion. Experience showed, as he had pointed out, that in most cases it would be accepted, and therefore some such scheme is considered of great value in settling these disputes. He had framed the bill at the suggestion of the Commissioner of Public Works, who would have done so himself had he been in the possession of good health. It had the approbation, he believed, of the workmen generally, and he was not aware that the employers had objected to it. There had been a liberal distribution of copies of the bill, and the only suggestion of a change was in regard to men working on railways. This class of workmen considered themselves to be somewhat peculiarly placed, and that they should have arbitrators in their disputes other than those who dealt with disputes of other classes of workmen. In New South Wales the bill provided not only for a separate arbitration for railway employees, but for several other classes of workmen. He proposed to have the bill altered so as to have two councils, one for workmen on railways and one for all other classes of workmen. As to the arbitrators, it had been found useful for the Government to appoint them, though they were to be named by the different parties to the dispute. As to the Chairman of the Council of Arbitration, if the two arbitrators selected by the employers and employed, according to the machinery provided, did not succeed in selecting one, the power of appointment was left to the Lieut.-Governor in Council.

### MR. MEREDITH DOUBTFUL.

Mr. Meredith said that every one must sympathize with a measure with such an object as the Attorney-General had defined, and that no one would be better pleased than he if the Legislature could make the wheels of commerce move the smoother. Whatever criticism he might offer would not be unfriendly What struck him about the bill was the cumbrous machinery provided; it seemed to be an effort to substitute for the machinery which would be chosen naturally by the parties a machinery which had been provided by the Legislature and which had no power of e