

Government Bills and Estimates Occupy the Day.

Legislative Chamber, April 5.

The House spent this afternoon in committee on a couple of Government bills, and in the evening in Committee of Supply, mainly on the Education Department vote. The bills advanced were the Attorney-General's measure to settle trade disputes and Mr. Ross' bill regarding Upper Canada College. There were some lively discussions on both bills, the U. C. C. bill drawing from Mr. Meredith a pronouncement in favor of the severance of all relations between the Government and the college, and from Mr. Ross the remark that he partly agreed with the idea, and that the present bill to some extent looked in that direction. In the evening a discussion of some length, taken part in by a good many members on both sides, took place on the increase of \$10,000 made to poor schools. The Opposition attacked the item, though they contended their opposition was rather to the way in which the poor school fund was administered than to the proposed increase. Government speakers contrasted the opposition of Mr. Meredith and his followers on the present occasion with the stand they took a few years ago, when Mr. Marter introduced a resolution advocating precisely what the Government was now doing, and which all the members of the Opposition had supported.

The House at once went into committee on the Attorney-General's bill for the settlement of trade disputes. With trifling alterations, the bill went smoothly along until the committee reached the fourth clause, the first section of which provided as follows:—"The Lieutenant-Governor is hereby authorized to appoint a suitable person to act as Registrar of Councils of Conciliation and of Arbitration for the settlement of industrial disputes. Such office shall be assigned to some person performing other duties in the public service, unless and until the duties are so onerous as to require a separate appointment."

Mr. Meredith said the last clause of this section simply provided the Government with an opportunity for the appointment of a friend of theirs to an office. It meant, as so much other legislation in this House meant, that a new office in the public service was in all likelihood to be created. He could not see that there was the least probability of the duties of a Registrar under the bill becoming so onerous that they could not be performed by any other than a specially-appointed official. He thought the words "unless and until," etc., should be taken out of the clause, and moved accordingly. The Government would then, he said, be unable to make an appointment until they had obtained power to do so from the House by amending the bill.

The Attorney-General emphatically repudiated the insinuation that the Government was in any way anxious to create an office simply to fill it. He had no expectation that any appointment would be necessary, but it was well to have such power included in the bill. As to the Government being unable to appoint an officer without permission of the House, they could, of course, appoint a temporary official. That was a right inseparable from the exercise of the power of the Executive. A permanent position the Government had never sought to create without

power from the House. The Government must necessarily have the power of making a temporary appointment in cases where it became necessary. Business could not be carried on if the Government were not given authority to do this. He denied that under circumstances similar to those proposed in the bill excuse had ever been found for making a permanent appointment.

Mr. Clancy said there was great temptation to a Government—a dying Government, he was going to say—to fill an office left in this shape. There was no reason whatever to suppose there would be any large amount of work in this connection to be performed during the coming year. The retention of the section in question simply meant that temptation was put in the Government's way.

Mr. White objected to the section, and to the clause, and to the bill altogether. There were no strikes causing particular trouble in Ontario. What was the matter with the Attorney-General, that he brought in such a bill, anyway? It was for no other reason than that a lot of officials could be appointed.

Hon. Mr. Hardy suggested that Mr. White had not read the section, because it only provided for the appointment of one Registrar.

Mr. White—Only one! Then he must be a very peculiar person, indeed, to do all this. He will be one of those officials who travel all over the Province.

Mr. Hardy—Ha! ha!

Mr. White—The hon. gentleman laughs. He can't look at the Attorney-General without. He and the Attorney-General are always nodding and smiling at each other.

Mr. White then urged that the bill generally was useless, and the clauses in question particularly objectionable because it would lead to the appointment of an officer.

The clause was then passed, Mr. Meredith's amendment being voted down.

Mr. White, in continuing his objections, found fault with the four conciliators when the clause providing for their appointment was reached. Why four? That was cumbersome, he said, and two would be enough. Four "conspirators" would be a better word.

Sir Oliver observed that for such a purpose two on each side were better than one.

Later on the question of the appointment of the Chairman of the Council of Arbitration came up, and Mr. Meredith inquired very particularly as to the mode of appointment, hinting his belief that the mode of appointment was vested in the Lieutenant-Governor in order to add to the Government's patronage.

The Attorney-General replied that he absolutely denied the charge that the Government in its 22 years had ever created an office for the sake of the patronage resulting, and that the imputation was a peculiarly far-fetched one.

Mr. Meredith rejoined that the imputation, he admitted, would be far-fetched if applied to any other Government than the one in question. He had had too many opportunities of watching its course to take any stock in this declaration.

The Attorney-General retorted that the people of Ontario had watched its course for 22 years and had taken stock in its declarations during that period.

On the eighteenth clause, where the President of the Council of Arbitration is invested with the powers of a Judge of the High Court of Justice for the purpose of preserving order during the sessions of the council, Mr. White ridiculed the idea of an official travelling around the Province with the dignity of a Judge and making himself a nuisance by compelling lawyers to wear their white "chokers."

Mr. Meredith asked if it would not be better to prohibit the President from committing for contempt of court. That seemed to him a very dangerous power to confer upon him.

After a few minutes' talk the Attorney-General accepted the suggestion and added a few words restricting the President's powers in this respect.

The provision requiring the report or award to be published in The Ontario Gazette and one newspaper circulating in the vicinity was amended by making it read so as to require publication of the award in The Gazette if either party to the dispute wishes and the council approves, all reference to any other newspaper being omitted.

In regard to clause 21, providing for the enforcement of attendance of witnesses, Mr. Meredith said it might lead to the summoning of witnesses and the production and making public of testimony in regard to the details of the business of a manufacturer, for instance, that might be very profitable to his rivals and place him at a great disadvantage.

The Attorney-General did not think there was any serious danger of this, not any more than in a submission to arbitration under the present law.

Mr. Meredith said the bill was described as voluntary in principle, yet the councils were empowered to force witnesses to appear before it.

Blanks had been left in the clause pro