

Mr. Clarcy and the Public Accounts Committee.

SIR OLIVER'S STATEMENT.

Equipment of University Departments.

The Evening Session Spent in Discussing the Management of Public Institutions.

Legislative Chamber, April 17.

The House spent a large portion of today on Government business, but less progress was made than might well have been hoped. A long discussion occurred during the afternoon at the instance of Mr. Clarcy on his purely imaginary grievance in connection with the Public Accounts Committee and its rights as to the examination of matters outside the public accounts. It ended by the House investing the committee with power to inquire into the points Mr. Clarcy wishes investigated. In the evening the House went into supply, and a long and not very profitable debate occurred on the management of the public institutions of the Province.

The first order of business taken up was third readings. The following bills passed through this stage:—Respecting mortgages and sales of personal property (Mr. Gibson); respecting the City of Toronto (Mr. Clarke, Toronto); to amend the law of landlord and tenant (Mr. Snider). Several other bills down for a third reading were again put through committee and slightly amended.

THE UNIVERSITY.

Hon. Mr. Ross then moved the ratification of the following order in Council, approved on the 11th inst.:—"Upon consideration of the report of the hon. the Minister of Education, dated 9th April, 1894, the committee of Council advise that, subject to the approval of the Legislative Assembly, the following sums be paid out of the permanent fund of the University of Toronto for the below-mentioned purposes, namely:—(1) Equipment of chemical laboratory, \$20,000; (2) completion of gymnasium building, \$8,000; (3) glass and iron cases for museum, \$12,000." Mr. Ross pointed out that a few years ago the House had approved the expenditure by the University of \$60,000 for a chemical laboratory. This, however, had not been erected, the University not having hitherto felt it could afford the expenditure. The Trustees, however, felt that they could now proceed with the erection of the building, and, in view thereof, the sum named as the first item would be necessary for equipment. This sum had been named by the Trustees on the strength of a report furnished by Prof. Pyke. Then, the University had spent, by permission, \$25,000 on the erection of a gymnasium building, which, however, they had not been able to complete for that sum, according to the original plan. The reading room, which was intended to be included in the building, would be added out of this additional amount. The third item was to provide glass cases for the Biological Department. The University was in possession, through gifts of friends, and from foreign institutions, of specimens valuing \$40,000 or \$50,000, which were scattered through the building, and were liable to suffer injury. It was proposed to put these in cases. Now, how was this expense to be met? The order in Council stated, out of the permanent fund of the University. But how was the University to recoup itself? This would be done by an increase in the fees of the students. The increase amounted to \$10, and this, with \$90 to 1,000 students, would mean \$8,900 to \$10,000 a year. The expenditure of \$100,000 from the permanent fund, which would be the total of the items now under consideration, added to the \$60,000 previously sanctioned, would reduce the fixed revenue of the University by \$5,000 a year. The increased fees would, therefore, more than make up this amount.

Mr. Meredith asked what this application was based on. Mr. Ross replied that it was based on the report of the Trustees brought down a few days earlier.

Mr. Meredith complained that the report had not been distributed, and that members of the House did not know why these sums were required, further than Mr. Ross had stated.

After a few minutes' discussion, Mr. Ross promised to have the report in question printed, and to defer further consideration of the subject until then.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS.

Government orders were then taken up, the amendments made in committee to the Attorney-General's bill to erect Nipissing into a provisional judicial district being concurred in. Hon. Mr. Gibson's bill to amend the registry act was considered in Committee of the Whole; and the first two clauses of Mr. Monk's bill, which is to the same effect, were incorporated in the bill. The rest of the bill was passed. Hon. Mr. Gibson's bill to amend the Division Courts act was given its second reading. Hon. Mr. Hardy's bill relating to mines and mining lands was then taken up in committee. Mr. Hardy announced that he would consent to a modification of the first clause, relating to a five years' suspension of royalties. This modification was really Mr. Conmee's amendment, but Mr. Meredith secured the floor first and moved that a new sub-section be added, that lands heretofore sold, leased or granted, subject to royalty, should be relieved therefrom. Mr. Conmee retorted with a rather longer amendment to the amendment, relating to the same subject, which, Mr. Meredith claimed, meant the same thing, but which Mr. Conmee said went somewhat further. It was finally decided to postpone the consideration of this first section until a later date, and the remaining clauses were passed, the committee then rising.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

The order paper was then departed from to allow of Mr. Clarcy bringing forward a formal motion, on the strength of which he discussed the action of the Public Accounts Committee a few days ago in rescinding a motion to call for examination before the committee the Deputy Registrars of East Northumberland and Peterborough. He repeated at some length the arguments used in the committee, to the effect that the committee had a right to summon these witnesses in connection with the item of \$1,600 for the salary of Mr. E. B. F. Johnson, the inspector of legal offices. It had been contended by the Treasurer that the witnesses named could not be called, because there was no item in the accounts from the offices represented by them. There was a serious disparagement between the expenses of some other registry offices and those named. The inspector's report contained statements which should be inquired into. Mr. Clarcy supported his contention as to the rights of the committee by quotations from various Parliamentary authorities. Mr. Clarcy's motion was that the public accounts be referred to the Public Accounts Committee, a motion that, he said, was made annually at Ottawa, and should be made annually here, but had not been made since 1874. The motion went on to ask that the reference should be with special relation to inquiry into registry offices.

The Attorney-General said the Government had no desire to shield any officer from the effects of any improper acts. It was not, however, advisable to allow a committee to deal with any other matters than those committed to it. The action of the committee in rescinding its original resolution, and the text of the rescinding resolution, was in entire agreement with May's Parliamentary Procedure as to the powers of the committee. The assumption that anything was wrong suggested that something improper had been done by the Registrars. Yet it was proposed to call the Deputy Registrars, without giving the Registrar a chance to defend himself.

He had quoted figures as to relative expenditures. There was ample explanation of this. The committee was fully entitled to inquire into the item of the inspector's salary. But Mr. Clarcy did not say his salary should not have been paid. The Registrar had only to account to the Province for all receipts over \$2,500, but the whole revenue of East Northumberland amounted only to \$2,417 85, of which the Registrar's net income was only \$955. Therefore there was nothing that came under the control of the Government that appeared in the public accounts, or consequently within the jurisdiction of the committee. The figures that Mr. Clarcy had quoted did not appear in the public accounts at all. The Attorney-General argued that it would be out of the question to have the committee consider itself entitled to investigate matters so far beyond its scope. It was late in the session, but the Government had no desire to shield anybody, he repeated, and, therefore, the committee might be armed specially with power to inquire into the point desired. He therefore proposed an amendment to Mr. Clarcy's motion, the effect of which was to give the committee authority to investigate the expenditure in connection with the Registry Office of East Northumberland.

Mr. Meredith upheld the contention of Mr. Clarcy, and claimed the course of the Government and of the Attorney-General in moving the present amendment was simply to stop an inquiry into an important political issue. Mr. Clarcy's motion in committee had covered two offices, Northumberland and Peterboro'. The At-