

Col. Matheson (South Lanark) said Mr. Stratton had totally missed the point that Councils had under the bill the right to remit that taxation without going to the people. The bill was limited to the companies taxed by the Ontario Government. This was the reward for the taxation they had to pay. This would give them the chance of lobbying the Councils, not the people, to exempt them from taxation.

Dr. McKay (South Oxford) said that until two years ago municipalities had the absolute right of fixing their rates of taxation. He reminded the House that municipalities as well as companies asked for this bill.

Mr. Crawford (West Toronto) said if there was any danger in any bill introduced in the House they had none more serious or dangerous than this. The most important feature of the bill was that the people were not consulted as to the exemptions. It showed that the corporations "ruled the roost."

Hon. Mr. Davis said the men who were municipal Councillors were reputable and trustworthy, and could be depended on to watch the interests of the people. Nobody had objected to the scrap-iron law when it was put on the statute book.

The Assent of the People.

Mr. Carscallen (East Hamilton) said that on every occasion when the Government amended the assessment laws they went further away from the protection of the people's rights, and further in the direction of aiding great corporations. The assent of the people should be required to such measures, the same as in the case of bonuses. The Premier's bill was simply brought down to nullify the assessment commission's report.

Mr. Conmee (West Algoma) thought that the bill was giving back to municipalities power which they formerly held, or, if they did not formerly have the power indicated in the bill, it was investing them with it now. He thought the Opposition members were committing a wrong in throwing out insinuations against the honesty of the members of municipal Councils.

Mr. Barr (Dufferin) believed that if the question "Whence the agitation for this bill?" were put the answer would be, "There is a power outside of this House which controls this Government." With all respect to the great corporations, many of which, it must be admitted, were helping in developing the country, the measure was one which was framed in their interests and not in the interests of the people.

The Opposition's Plan.

Hon. Mr. Latchford said that the plan of action followed by the Opposition was based on the hope that it would be popular throughout the country. There could be no doubt that considerable feeling had been aroused on account of some corporations trying to take advantage of the public. He went over the various changes in the assessment law, and expressed the opinion that the present measure would be found to work most satisfactorily. He had no thought that under the measure members of municipal Councils would be subjected to any temptation from

the corporations. Even if that were the case in isolated instances he had confidence enough in the honesty of the men who constituted the municipal Councils to believe that they would resent any attempt to corrupt them.

Would Lead to Rivalry.

Mr. Miscampbell (East Simcoe) said that the bill not only gave away the safeguards of municipalities, but opened the way for rivalry between them. In the Private Bills Committee they had been fighting against the bonus system, because it led to rivalry between municipalities desirous of getting new industries. The Attorney-General had taken strong grounds on the question. But the powers of the present bill were simply exemptions or bonuses under another name.

Mr. Morrison (West Hastings) saw danger in the possibility of a majority of the members of Councils being stockholders in large corporations, which was within their rights. Such stockholders would be under strong influence.

Mr. Beatty (Leeds) spoke very briefly against the bill.

The motion for second reading carried without division. Mr. Whitney desired it to be understood that the Opposition did not approve of the measure, and might, on the third reading, suggest modifications.

Purchase of Toll Roads.

The Premier, in moving the second reading of his bill to facilitate the purchase of toll roads by municipalities, briefly explained the main provisions. The measure, he said, provided the machinery for arbitration when the municipality and the lessees of a toll road could not make a bargain. Where only one township is interested an arbitrator shall be appointed by the Municipal Council on the petition of 50 ratepayers. Where more than one township is concerned petitions from 50 ratepayers of each township are required, and the case goes to the County Council. The township, in case of failure to agree, will appoint one arbitrator, the lessees another and the two a third. If they fail to agree on a third the County Judge will act as arbitrator. Where more than one township is concerned the County Council will appoint an arbitrator for them. It is also provided that instead of buying a road out and out and issuing debentures to pay for the same, a township assuming the maintenance of a road may let the tolls be kept up for a period of ten years, which would be long enough to raise the money to pay the lessees.

Routine Business.

The bill was read a second time, as were also the following other Government measures:—

To amend the Ontario shops regulation act—Mr. Dryden.

To amend the municipal drainage act—Mr. Gibson.

The following were taken up in committee and advanced a stage:—

To amend the Ontario companies act—Mr. Stratton.

To consolidate and amend the act respecting high schools and collegiate institutes—Mr. Harcourt.

To amend the land titles act—Mr. Gibson.