

PAYMENT ON THE MARKSTAY ROAD.

Opposition Insinuate a Corrupt Motive.

JUST BEFORE ELECTION.

Sharp Passage in the Legis- lature.

Discussion on the Recent Fishing Leases—Possibility of Protracted Session.

The payment in May last of \$180 to a Conservative in West Nipissing, with which to build a colonization road, caused a small tempest in the Legislature yesterday. It arose from Dr. Beattie Nesbitt's motion for correspondence, supplemented by an innuendo by him that the transaction smelled of corruption, inasmuch as the election was only a few days later. The Premier replied at first jocularly, but the Opposition pursuing the matter, he indignantly challenged the imputation, and warmly condemned the policy of mistrusting the motive of every act of the Government. The matter had been discussed in the Public Accounts Committee earlier in the day. The motion passed, and the House passed on to a discussion of the recent fishing leases.

The prospects for an early adjournment do not seem so bright now. The early conclusion of the Gamey inquiry leads to the expectation that the report may be submitted before many days, and in that case the ensuing discussion will probably take some time.

Police Village Regulations.

Col. Gibson introduced an act to give police villages a chance to carry out their own local improvements. At present the township has to pass a by-law and do the work. Under this act the police villages will construct the sidewalk and be responsible for its maintenance.

Fishing Licenses.

Mr. Hendrie asked if the Government had entered into any agreement with any persons or corporations—others than those mentioned in the report for 1902—granting fishing concessions in Lakes Nepigon, Manitou or other Ontario lakes, and if such agreements or those already mentioned would be laid before the House.

Hon. Mr. Latchford replied:—"No; the agreements were approved by order in Council. The act does not require their ratification by the Legislature. If they are moved for they will be brought down."

John McMaster's Appointment.

Dr. Nesbitt moved for a return of correspondence and papers relating to the appointment of John McMaster, in May, 1902, as overseer of work to be performed on Markstay and Warren road, in Algoma or Nipissing, and to the work done, security given and money advanced or expended in connection therewith.

Dr. Nesbitt made the complaint that McMaster had received \$180 in bills in a letter from the Treasury Department on May 26, three days before the general Provincial election. He read a number of letters concerning the appointment of McMaster, with a view to showing that McMaster received the

grant for the purpose of influencing his vote.

Mr. Latchford Explains.

Mr. Latchford replied that he had investigated the matter personally a few days ago, after it had been brought up by a question by Dr. Nesbitt. He found that a recommendation had reached the department about May 20 from the present representative for West Nipissing (Mr. Michaud). He did not think he was then a candidate. He sent a recommendation in favor of the appointment of John McMaster. The amount of the grant was a very small one. The custom was to ask for the bond and receive it before a grant was sent out. He believed, however, that it was sometimes the case that when the grant was small it was sometimes sent out before the bond was received. He understood that the report of the inspector was that the work was well done. In any event, there was no objection to the papers asked for in the motion being brought down.

Col. Matheson said the point was not that the money was misspent. It was that three days before the election, without any application on his part, Mr. McMaster received letters appointing him; letters not sent to him in an envelope addressed to him. These letters were sent to Cockburn, a Crown lands agent. He sent his son up to canvass the Conservatives in the west riding of Nipissing, offering them pay in the public service if they would vote for the Government candidate. Other similar cases had occurred. The Public Works Department was using its colonization roads money in order to try to corrupt the electors in favor of their candidates. McMaster was canvassed to vote for the Government candidate. He refused, saying he was a Conservative. He was asked to work for the Government, and his services would be paid for. He was told that if he would go to the postoffice he would find a letter from the Treasury Department. He went, and on May 26 received \$180 in bills from the Treasury Department.

Where the Mistake Was Made.

Mr. Ross replied that the objection seemed to be that the man who received the grant was a Conservative. He supposed a Conservative might be employed in building a good road.

Mr. Matheson—Three days before the election?

Mr. Ross—Well, that is the time in which the good road was wanted. What is the harm in building a road three days before an election? You could not expect a man to build a road without money. The vote was given for the express purpose of building the road. Perhaps we made a mistake in asking a Conservative to build a road. There is no charge that the money was misapplied. You could build roads three days before elections without any corrupt intent. This is merely a suspicion. My hon. friend puts two and two together and makes five of them.

Mr. Matheson—There were two other cases.

Mr. Ross—Were they corrupt?

Mr. Matheson—I don't know.

Mr. Ross—No, it is a will-o'-the-wisp, and my hon. friend has been chasing it and has not found it. And if he did find it, it would be a Conservative. It was just a money transaction. The only mistake was in asking a Conservative to do the work. Now, I protest against this narrowness in politics. If a Conservative is the only man who can build a road, give it to a Conservative to build. (Applause.)

Done by His Secretary.

Mr. J. J. Foy (South Toronto) repeated the accusation of irregularity.

Mr. Latchford explained that he had been out of the city at the time, and the matter had been attended to by his secretary. He had been assured by the hon. member for West Nipissing (Mr. Michaud) that McMaster had requested to be appointed overseer on this road.

Mr. Foy said the explanation showed that those things worked automatically in the absence of the Minister in elec-