

no petition should be withdrawn without the leave of the court upon special application. On the hearing of the application for withdrawal any person might apply to the court to be substituted for the petitioner. Not only that, but, under another clause, in the case of withdrawal of such petition the court had to report to the Speaker whether the withdrawal was the result of any corrupt arrangement or in consideration of the withdrawal of any other petition. That, he supposed, was in reality an express provision against what was known as the saw-off process. He did not know whether the courts had ever made much investigation into such matters, but they were probably met with the difficulty that in most cases no particulars were filed, and in their absence the court was helpless.

It must be remembered that in every petition an affidavit had to be filed stating that the deponents present the petition in good faith, having reason to believe that their statements were true. Of course it might be said that such affidavits could be made on very flimsy foundation, but the intention of the affidavit was to prevent the filing of petitions where there was no ground for them, and he had no doubt it had had that effect. They must not shut their eyes to the fact that the filing of petitions against irregularly conducted elections would have some deterrent influence in making people more careful as to the manner in which elections were conducted.

"I do not propose to divide the House at the present time on this bill," concluded Mr. Gibson. "I propose that it go to the Legal Committee, where it may be discussed with other bills of a similar nature. I expect to have a bill myself amending the Ontario elections act. I am endeavoring to deal with the question of the issuing of the writ in the case of bye-elections, to see whether it can or cannot be made absolutely automatic. We know that such an automatic arrangement might result in inconvenience to both parties unless great care is used in framing the law. I confess I find it difficult to prepare a provision that is satisfactory to my own mind, but I hope to be able to do so before very long."

Honest Saw-offs.

Mr. Foy said the bill touched on a subject which he thought required some attention. There were a good many reasons why the time for filing petitions should be extended. One advantage would be that it would give opportunity for the sifting of the wild rumors that were placed in circulation immediately after every election. In many cases, if a little more time had been given the petitions would not have been filed. The public were under a misapprehension as to saw-offs. These were often the result of haste in the filing of petitions. There was an honest dropping of the petitions resulting from statements on both sides that the filing of the petitions had been mistakes. The penalty was a subject that needed some consideration. If a man filed a petition in good faith, having received wrong reports as to the facts, he should have an opportunity to withdraw without a penalty. There was the danger that if he could not withdraw he would determine to go ahead and have a run for his money anyway. If the bill were sent to the committee some good legislation in regard to the controverted elections act might result.

A Public Scandal.

Mr. Carscallen (Hamilton) said the question of election protests had become a public scandal. Something

ought to be done. At the same time he would not deprive anyone of the right to petition in good faith. They could easily safeguard petitioners who desired in good faith to present a petition for the purification of politics. There would be no trouble if they would just have courage and drop political considerations for a time. The law was weak so far as it related to the qualification of petitioners. Any person who was assessed at \$1,000 on the last assessment roll could file a petition. In his own case he believed the three men whose names appeared on a petition against him were not worth \$500 between them. They were on the last assessment roll at \$1,000. He even believed that two of them had been paid \$25 to let their names be put to the petition. This could be substantiated in regard to one of them. The class of petitioners should be raised by increasing the qualification. The time within which a petition could be filed should run from the polling day, so as to relieve the Government and the officials of the suspicion of holding back the returns in order to postpone a petition. In 1898 there were 76 or 78 petitions filed and only six or seven went to trial. The majority were filed to harass the member elected. All these things had a tendency to drive decent men out of public life.

Heelers and Grafters.

If they got men into a position where they would think through their pockets they would be effecting some good. He was therefore in favor of a pretty strong penalty being imposed. Everyone knew that there were solicitors who were a tax upon both sides. Something should be done to get after the heelers, grafters and similar men who preyed upon members of Parliament. He hoped something would be done to stop this practice, and he believed penalizing them to a reasonable extent would be a very effective remedy.

Mr. Reid (Addington), said he had been elected four times, and had had four petitions against him. Every one knew that if there was a member who had been honestly elected it was the member for Addington. (Laughter.)

Mr. Conmee—I have had an equal number of petitions. (Laughter.)

Mr. Clark hoped there was no intention of killing his bill by sending it to committee.

Hon. Mr. Gibson assured the hon. gentleman that there was no such intention. He hoped to be able to do something which would help to bring about clean methods.

Mr. Whitney remarked that when the bill came before the committee they would find that it was a most difficult subject to deal with.

The bill was then referred to the Legal Committee.

Abandon Statute Labor.

In moving the second reading of his bill respecting statute labor, Attorney-General Gibson said that no change in the law as it now stood had been made in the bill, but on the suggestion of the commissioners the provisions relating to statute labor now found in the assessment act had been made the subject of a distinct act. That must not be interpreted as indicating any intention of working up a law on this subject, but rather to cull from the assessment act all provisions relating to statute labor, with a view, at the earliest possible moment, to the extinction of any legislation on the subject. Many of the provisions were somewhat archaic, and the performance of statute labor was regarded as a sham. The bill was read a second time.

Security of Officials.

The Premier's bill to amend the law respecting the security of public officers was read a second time. Mr. Ross explained that it enabled Division Court clerks to be placed on the same basis in regard to guarantee bonds as Sheriffs, license inspectors and similar officers. The guarantee bonds of the public service now amounted to \$1,800,000.

The Premier in moving the second

reading of the bill to amend the general road companies act said the measure had been introduced owing to a condition of affairs prevailing in Elgin County. As the law now stood a municipality was liable for damages for accidents on toll roads, and not the lessee. The bill provided that where the lessee allowed a toll road to get out of repair the Municipal Council or the road inspector so reporting might make the necessary repairs and collect the tolls. The lessee was given a period of five years in which to redeem the road, and if at the end of that period the lessee had not repaid to the Municipal Council the cost of the repairs the road became ipso facto the property of the municipality.

There was no objection to the bill.

Houses of Refuge.

Hon. Mr. Stratton, in explaining his bill respecting houses of refuge, said that a number of counties were this year proceeding with the erection of houses of refuge in compliance with the act of last year. He was particularly anxious to facilitate such work, because he was quite satisfied that as soon as each county was provided with a house of refuge or house of industry there would be fewer people sent to the insane asylums who should really be committed to ordinary houses of refuge. The bill permitted counties to make arrangements with adjacent cities or towns for sewerage, gas, electric light, or waterworks connections, arbitrators to decide in case of dispute; it also empowered counties to issue debentures to the amount of \$30,000 for the erection of houses of refuge without submitting a by-law to the people.

Dr. Willoughby suggested that counties be relieved of the necessity of purchasing a farm in connection with the house of refuge. The suggestion was discussed for half an hour, but Dr. Willoughby found no supporters. Dr. Jessop, Hon. Mr. Harcourt, Hon. Mr. Stratton, Mr. Whitney, Mr. Graham and Mr. J. J. Preston all spoke of the advantages that were being derived from the provision in the act that there shall be a fifty-acre farm in connection with all such institutions.

The bill was read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Harcourt's measure to amend the high schools act and the act respecting the Toronto Board of Education, and Hon. Mr. Gibson's bill to amend the act respecting religious institutions, also got second reading.

Third Readings.

The following bills were read a third time:—Respecting the Town of Perth, Mr. Matheson; authorizing the Town of Ingersoll to issue certain debentures, Mr. Sutherland; to confirm a by-law of the City of Chatham, Mr. Pardo.

Paper and Printing Contracts.

The Premier moved for ratification of the agreement for the paper supply for the House made with the Riordon paper mills for five years from Jan. 2, 1904, as approved by order in Council. The new contract meant an annual saving of at least \$1,500, or about \$8,000 in the five years. The contract was in the terms of the old contract, and would be binding for the five years.

Mr. Matheson thought the contract should have been more extensively advertised. A circular ought to have been sent around to the manufacturers. The contract price averaged 5 cents to 5½ cents per pound. The tenders should have been per pound, not per ream. He was told by a member of the trade that 4 cents would be the outside price, and 3 cents to 3½ cents would not be unreasonable. The motion should only be carried on division.

The Premier replied that there were various prices, ranging from \$2.72 per ream to \$1.82 per ream of 46 pounds. He thought the advertisement had been in accord with the usual practice.

Mr. Matheson—Were there any