

think, to make it a sub-committee of the Committee on Contingencies. For this reason, and for other reasons which will occur to hon. members, I think it is better not to have this a select committee, and I therefore ask permission to withdraw this motion.

The motion was withdrawn.

INQUIRIES CONCERNING PUBLIC MATTERS BILL.

SECOND READING.

HON. MR. ABBOTT moved second reading of Bill (A), "An Act to make further provision respecting Inquiries concerning Public Matters." He said: This is a Bill which I am sure will be readily concurred in. A difficulty has arisen in the prosecution of inquiries by commissioners, some witnesses declining to answer questions put to them, on the ground that their answers might criminate or tend to criminate them. The sole object of the Bill is to remove that difficulty, by providing that they shall not be entitled to any privilege of the kind; but making further provision, also, that if the evidence which they give should criminate them they will not be prosecuted in consequence of it, unless they are guilty of perjury.

HON. MR. McINNES (B.C.)—To what class of prosecutions does this apply?

HON. MR. ABBOTT—Inquiries into public matters. There is a law which authorizes the appointment of commissions for making such inquiries, and the value of these investigations has often been destroyed by the fact of persons, supposed to be implicated in the matters inquired into, having refused to answer, on the ground that they might criminate themselves. This Bill provides that no witness examined before such a commission shall be excused from answering any question put to him on the ground that he might criminate himself, and at the same time, in justice to the witness, it prevents any use being made of his answers to take criminal proceedings against him. The details of the Bill will come up to-morrow, and I shall be happy to receive suggestions when it comes before a Committee of the Whole House.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read the second time.

HON. MR. ABBOTT.

CORRUPT PRACTICES IN MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS BILL.

SECOND READING.

HON. MR. ABBOTT moved the second reading of Bill (B), "An Act respecting Corrupt Practices in Municipal Affairs." He said: This Bill is one which is framed, perhaps not absolutely to supply any want in the common law of the country, but to declare in plain and positive terms what that common law is. I have no doubt that the offences against public order which are defined in this Bill are punishable under the common law of England. If I am right in that respect, the principle has fallen into disuetude; the acts reprobated in this Bill frequently occur, and it has been generally supposed there is no remedy and no punishment for them. The acts to which I refer are acts of corruption by members and officers of municipal councils, and the object of the Bill is to define offences of that description and to provide a punishment for them—that is to say, offences consisting in the reception of corrupt consideration by members of municipal councils for the votes which they give upon measures before them, and offences committed by municipal officers in receiving corrupt consideration for performing any of their duties as such municipal officers, and imposing a punishment for doing so. The law is by no means new. It prevails in the neighboring country, and it is a matter of notoriety that convictions have been obtained there for offences of this description, while in Quebec a law has been passed defining these offences in very much the same way as they are defined here; but naturally, the Province having no jurisdiction—not that necessary kind of jurisdiction over criminal offences—has not been able to constitute those offences a crime and affix to it punishment as for a crime. For the purpose of remedying this difficulty and of placing on the Statute Book a law which defines clearly and plainly, so that no one can mistake or ignore what constitutes a criminal offence in the performance of his duty as a member of a municipal council or as a municipal officer, and providing punishment for offences of that description, this law has been framed and introduced.

The motion was agreed to.