

I do not misinterpret the opinion of the great majority of the members of the House, it is desired by the House it should be, namely, the enforcement of the law by some legal tribunal. I am exceedingly obliged to my hon. friends on both sides, who have addressed the House, for the courteous manner in which the Bill has been received; for the very great attention they have given to its discussion, and for the light many of them have thrown upon its provisions. I trust now that the motion has been placed in your hands it will receive the assent of the House. If the Bill were referred to the Railway Committee it would be at least doubtful whether it could become law, owing to the amount of business which must take precedence of it with that body. I am not wedded to any particular word or phrase of the measure; but I do not desire that a Railway Commission should be constituted, which should be qualified to enforce against the railway companies the laws placed on the Statute book. It would be wrong to send the Bill to the Railway Committee, as they have a great number of Bills on their orders already, and, as I have said before, its fate might be doubtful. This being a public Bill, it should be dealt with by the House or a Select Committee, and when that Committee's report is presented, it could receive the consideration of the House and the Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to.

PREVENTION OF FRAUD IN RELATION TO CONTRACTS.

Mr. CASGRAIN, in moving the second reading of Bill (No. 7) for the better prevention of fraud in relation to contracts involving the expenditure of public moneys, said: The Bill, is the same that I brought forward last year. It was then referred to a Select Committee of the House, one of the members of which was the late Minister of Justice, now Chief Justice of Nova Scotia. It received the careful attention of that Committee, and was reported to this House in consequence. I, last year, suggested that the Government should take this measure in hand, because it is one in which the Government is very much interested. The suggestion not having been accepted, I intend, myself, urging the measure upon the House to the best of my ability: I leave those aside for the present, and merely state that I do not believe there is a member in this House who does not feel that a measure of some kind in this direction is needed at present. Certain events that occurred immediately prior to last Session became so notorious that I could not help taking notice of them at the time, and introduced a measure to prevent their recurrence. It was then made evident that in some of the Public Departments the influence and favor of public officials was used in order to further the interests of private individuals in obtaining contracts. In the present Bill I propose to make a misdemeanor of such offences and to punish them. Not only does it propose to punish the guilty party with a penalty but to inflict such a punishment as will deter such persons from committing the same offence again. Hon. gentlemen must have observed that the mere payment of a small sum of money as a fine will not deter individuals from making large profits out of contracts if they can do so by spending a few hundreds or a few thousands of dollars. On the contrary, if you begin by trying to bribe some officials, they will willingly pay a small fine in order to secure a large advantage. Therefore, I make this offence a misdemeanor, and leave to the tribunal the imposition of a fine or a sentence of imprisonment for a certain number of months at the discretion of the court. Now, Sir, there is another class what we call middlemen, who come between the Government and contractors. These men have become, what I may

term contract brokers, whose influence must have a very baneful effect upon the public interest in the letting of contracts. The Bill provides that such persons shall also be punished by a fine and imprisonment. I need not remark that abuses which this measure seeks to prevent have already occurred. I know by long experience myself that they occurred in the old Province of Quebec. I know they have happened since, and last year we had still other instances. If this Bill becomes law it will provide in future for the punishment of persons guilty of fraud against the Government. It has been said that this measure is too severe, and that in consequence of being impracticable it will be useless. I do not think those objections are sound, because there is no doubt that parties guilty of fraud, will take every means to conceal it, and that is no reason why a strong attempt should not be made to detect and punish it by law. To this effect I would invite the attention of hon. members to the consideration of this Bill, in order to make it as perfect as possible. I am well aware that a measure of this kind cannot cover all cases; I am well aware it is not perfect as it now stands, though it has passed the test of a Select Committee when it was in the hands of an able lawyer, who now honors the bench of Nova Scotia. If any hon. gentleman can suggest any useful amendment it will gladly be accepted on my part. Now, there is another class of offences for which this Bill provides, that is, those in which officials receive a bonus or a reward from contractors in order to facilitate their operations with the Departments. This is an abuse that ought to be rigorously suppressed, and not only the person who receives a bribe ought to be punished but the person who offers it ought to be punished as well, and the former, at least, should be dismissed from the employ of the Government. In connection with this part of the subject is the use which contractors make of the money which they unjustly get from the Government by the means I have just mentioned, in paying heavy subscriptions for electioneering expenses. It is unnecessary for me to refer to any well known instances in the past where successful contractors have used their ill-gotten gains for electioneering purposes; but if these things have occurred once they may occur again, and I think we ought to provide by legislation against their repetition. I may add that when I proposed this measure last year the hon. leader of the Government said he was contemplating such a measure himself. On that occasion he said:

"There is now a measure of a very drastic and severe character before the Imperial Parliament for the purpose of preventing fraud. The Government propose to see that measure before dealing with the whole subject, and extend the provisions of the present Election Law, which in some respects are so severe as to be inoperative and in other respects are too lax."

I am sorry to see that such a measure has not been brought down this year. I think the one I now propose ought to receive the support of the Government, and I therefore move its second reading.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. This is the Bill which the hon. gentleman brought before the House last year, and he says the leader of the Government last year spoke of a Bill which was before the House of Commons in England on a similar subject, and wished to see the measure which was passed in England before dealing with an analogous measure in this House. The English Parliament, however, did not pass the Bill, owing, as the hon. gentleman knows, to the fact that other great measures were then engaging their attention. The hon. member for L'Islet (Mr. Casgrain) knows that a similar measure is now being brought before the House of Commons in England, and I think it would only be fair that we should await the result of whatever legislation may take place there, in order that we might have the benefit of their experience on this subject,