

Tables of the Trade and Navigation of the Dominion for the fiscal year 1881-82.—(Mr. Bowell.)

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD moved the adjournment of the House.

Motion agreed to; and (at 3.35 o'clock p.m.) the House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

FRIDAY, 16th February, 1883.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

PRAYERS.

REPORTS.

The following Reports were laid upon the Table:—

Annual Report of the Minister of Public Works for the fiscal year 1881-82, on the works under his control.—(Sir Hector Langevin.)

Report of the Secretary of State of Canada, for the year ended 31st December, 1882.—(Sir Hector Langevin.)

Report of the State of the Militia of the Dominion of Canada, for the year 1882.—(Mr. Caron.)

Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, for the year ended 31st December, 1882.—(Sir John A. Macdonald.)

Report, Returns and Statistics of the Inland Revenues of the Dominion of Canada, for the fiscal year ended 30th June, 1882.—(Mr. Costigan.)

Report on Adulteration of Food, being Supplement No. III. of the Department of Inland Revenue, 1882.—(Mr. Costigan.)

Ninth Report on Weights and Measures, being Supplement No. II. to the Report of the Department of Inland Revenue, 1882.—(Mr. Costigan.)

PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS.

Mr. BEATY moved that the time for receiving Petitions for Private Bills be extended to Thursday, the 1st day of March next, in accordance with the recommendation of the Select Standing Committee on Standing Orders.

Mr. BLAKE. It has been urged, and one Session I thought we had almost prevailed in the suggestion, that there should not be a general extension of time for receiving Petitions, and that after the delay fixed by the Standing Orders, no Petition should be received except under special circumstances. We are now at the commencement of a new Parliament, and while I do not now make a motion, I do submit to the hon. gentlemen who have control of the procedure of the House, that if it is to be laid down as a rule, as our assenting to this extension every Session does lay it down as a rule, that the first delay is merely formal and not to be regarded, we had better extend to some moderate limit the period of delay prescribed by the Standing Order, and having so extended it, not to permit further extension unless for cause, because otherwise, of course, persons will not regard the first limit, and will look upon it as a mere *brutum fulmen*.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I quite agree with my hon. friend, that the rule laid down should be adhered to. Practically, I fear that the time is too short, it ought to be extended, and the Standing Order should be altered in that regard; and after that time has expired, I quite agree that no Petition should be received except on its own merits. The object of the rule is to prevent surprise on outside parties who do not know when they may be called upon to

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defend their rights which may be attacked by these bills. Perhaps the House had better consider whether, instead of extending the time for a fortnight, it would not be better to extend it three or four weeks, and then rigidly adhere to that rule, except under extraordinary circumstances.

Motion agreed to.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD moved that a Select Committee, composed of Messrs. Blake, Cameron (Huron), Colby, Daly, Davies, Desjardins, Fortin, Houde, Jenkins, Laurier, Ouimet, Scrivier, Tassé, Weldon, Wells, and Wright, be appointed to assist Mr. Speaker in the direction of the Library of Parliament, so far as the interests of this House are concerned, and to act as Members of a Joint Committee of both Houses on the Library.

Motion agreed to.

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEES.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD moved that the Report of the Special Committee appointed to prepare and report Lists of Members to compose the Select Standing Committees of this House, in so far as relates to the following Committees, viz.:—On Privileges and Elections; on Expiring Laws; on Railways, Canals, and Telegraph Lines; on Miscellaneous Private Bills; on Printing; on Public Accounts; on Banking and Commerce; and on Immigration and Colonization, be concurred in.

Mr. BLAKE. It has been proposed by some hon. gentleman opposite, to introduce a new system with regard to Committees, and largely to reduce the number of members of the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I do not oppose the proposition as a general principle. On the contrary, my opinion is that we might very largely forward public business by the extension of that proposition with reference to all the Committees. While we adopt and continue the system of very large Committees, I look upon the reduction of the Public Accounts Committee as an experiment for this Session. I fear that a system which involves a great tax upon the more leading members of Committees who are called to serve, according to the present system, on three or four, will operate rather injuriously and unfairly to those who are in the minority on a small Committee, because it will be very difficult at times to find any degree of representation on that Committee of those who may be in the minority. I, however, submit cheerfully to the experiment for this Session, only reserving my right, if the practical results of the work done should indicate a change, to suggest one. It is of much more consequence that we should consider, and I would ask the hon. gentleman to take it into his consideration, whether he should not propose a small Committee to consider a plan for future Sessions of this Parliament, which would be more business-like, with the view of securing better results in that important portion of our business which is relegated to the Committees. With regard to the system in England, I will take one class of Committees as an example of their general principle—I refer to the Committees on what are called Railway Bills. There is a General Railway Committee which is not composed of 131 members like ours, but of some eight or nine members, who are called the General Railway Committee. Their function is to act as a Committee of selection, selecting from amongst the other members of the House some four members, I think, and appointing a chairman from amongst themselves. To those four members of the Committee are referred Railway Bills of a cognate character. For example, if there were a number of Bills for the construction of railways in the North-West, or a number of Bills for railways in