

Provincial Legislature

All Day Discussion on Mr. Jos. Martin's Celebrated Redistribution Resolution.

Some Amusing Passages at Arms Between the Members During the Debate.

Victoria, Feb. 14th.—Mr. Speaker took the chair at 2.12 p.m. Prayers being read by Rev. Mr. Leslie Clay, petitions were presented by Mr. Green. From eight residents at Kaslo, asking for legislation to assure the better observance of the Lord's Day.

By Mr. Keller.—From John McDowell, a carpenter, formerly employed at the government building.

Western Telephone Company.

In a report from the private bills committee, it was recommended that the petition for incorporation of the Western Telephone & Telegraph Co. be not granted, in consequence of the rules as to advertising not having been complied with.

On motion that the report be received, it was passed by a unanimous vote.

Col. Baker hoped to have some explanation from the private bills committee, which must have had good reason for the rejection of this bill.

Mr. Green said the committee had found that the standing rules had not been complied with, and after consideration could recommend no other course than that proposed by the report.

Mr. Turner said the House had frequently suspended general rules to assist projects clearly in the public interest.

Mr. A. W. Smith declared the neglect and delay in advertising was almost unparalleled in this instance, and pointed out the danger of allowing all rules of the House to be set at naught. There had never been a petition presented to the British Columbia Legislature so far as he was aware that was so much out of order as this.

Mr. Speaker announced that the rules could not be suspended, further debate arising upon this verbal ruling.

The motion of Mr. J. M. Martin was finally ruled out of order, having been objected to.

"Then we know who objects," asked Mr. McPhillips.

"I do," said Mr. Pooley, who announced as his reason that he was not in favor of passing any measure that he had had no opportunity to inspect.

Mr. Martin promised to renew his motion on the requisite two days' notice, and the debate was adjourned by the Attorney-General for three days.

Question of Privilege.

Mr. Munro, as a matter of privilege, directed attention to the fact that the Province newspaper, the whole of Mr. Neill's speech on the Coal Mines Regulation Amendment Bill had been credited to him. He would not be ashamed to own this speech, but he did not wish to take credit that did not belong to him.

Reports Presented.

Reports from the printing and the mining committees were presented, the former announcing certain returns and other documents as having been ordered printed, and the latter containing the recommendation that the number of the mining committee be reduced from nine to seven. Both reports were adopted.

The return asked for in a resolution of Mr. R. Smith, with respect to certain communications from W. J. Ledingham, was presented by Mr. E. J. Ledingham.

Mr. Cotton said on the table the annual report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works.

A Missing Letter.

Mr. Higgins, on a question of privilege, said that early in the session he had taken exception to the entire absence in the speech from the throne of any reference to the results attained upon the operation of the eight-hour law, and had censured the government for not introducing some legislation on the subject, calculated to terminate the existing deadlock in the House. A few days later he had moved for a return of all correspondence in this matter necessary for the intelligent consideration of the eight-hour measure, and its results. These returns had finally reached the House in printed form, and he had since spent some time in poring over them in order to gain a clear idea of the situation. It had since been his knowledge that one of the most important documents had been omitted from the return. The absent document was a letter from the Minister of Mines, and he had been given what purported to be a typewritten copy of this letter, addressed to Mr. J. J. Campbell of Nelson on the 5th of June, and signed by the Minister of Mines. It read:

Victoria, B. C., June 5th, 1899.

Sir: I beg to acknowledge your letter of the 20th ultimo, stating that the Council of the Nelson Board of Trade would esteem it a favor if the government would inform them as to the reason the government had in the first place in assenting to the eight-hour law, and secondly, after the operation of that law had been held in abeyance for a time, ultimately to decide upon its enforcement. I have called the attention of the executive to these questions, and they have decided that there is no object to be gained by replying this matter for the present, as it will be some time before the next session of the Legislative Assembly, when more definite view as to the working of the act can be ascertained. I am, sir, Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) J. F. HUME, Minister of Mines.

J. J. Campbell, Esq., Secretary Nelson District Mining Association, Nelson, B. C.

There could be but one interpretation

placed upon this withheld letter, it promised legislative action on the subject during the present session—

Hon. Mr. Henderson.—No, no. In any event the omission was a grave one, the junior member for Esquimalt concluded, and he hoped to hear from the government.

Later in the day Mr. Higgins gave notice of the following resolution:

"Whereas on the 8th day of January last the following resolution was unanimously passed by the House: 'That a respectful address be presented to His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, asking His Honor to cause to be laid before this House copies of all correspondence between the government of British Columbia, or any member thereof, and the government of the Dominion of Canada, or any member thereof; also, all correspondence between the government of British Columbia and any person, on persons, miners or on mine owners' unions, relating to the enforcement of the provisions of section 4 of an act entitled, 'Inspection of Metalliferous Mines Amendment Act, 1899'."

"And whereas on or about the 1st day of February a return which purported to be a full and complete return of the correspondence was laid before the House:

"And whereas there were omitted from the said return a letter which had an important bearing on the controversy with regard to the enforcement of the provisions of section 4 of an act entitled, 'Inspection of Metalliferous Mines Amendment Act, 1899,' said letter being addressed to the secretary of the Nelson District Mining Association by the Minister of Mines, and dealing as follows (the letter being here set forth):

"Therefore be it resolved that the suppression of the letter above quoted is a deliberate violation of the prerogatives of this House and an attempt to evade a promise to consider the eight-hour law at the present session, and that this House hereby censures and condemns the government for their failure to refer in said letter to the throne to the existing condition of affairs in Kootenay, and for their failure to introduce legislation to rectify the evils under which both miners and mine owners labor."

Return Ordered.

On the motion of Mr. Eberts a return was ordered of all correspondence, tenders, etc., in connection with the letting of the contract for keeping open the sleigh road between Barkerville and Coquitlam House, and all contracts let for such service; and upon the motion of Col. Baker a return of all correspondence between John Lister, of Nakusp, and the government or departmental officers, in relation to the purchase of one hundred and sixty acres of land on Kootenay Creek, B. C.

Mr. Martin's Motion.

On the clerk calling the order for Mr. Joseph Martin's motion respecting the Finance Minister.

Mr. Martin said: "I ask that that may stand."

Hon. Mr. Cotton.—No, Mr. Speaker, I think this a matter that the hon. gentleman should go on with. In justice to me it should not be allowed to stand. I am helpless in that matter. As it makes charges against me, I think it proper for him to bring it forward with out delay.

Mr. Martin.—I would have been quite prepared to go on with this matter to-day had it not been for the suggestion of the government that the redistribution matter would come up to-day. For this reason I had supposed that it was the government's wish that this should not come up.

Hon. Mr. Semlin.—I do not see that that would be any reason for passing over this important resolution. We have hardly yet got to the regular orders; when we get to them we will be able to take up that other matter.

Mr. Martin.—If I had had any idea of that kind I would have been prepared, I am not now prepared. If the government persisted in going on with the matter he should simply ask to drop the motion from the paper and put it on again. "I cannot go on without any material," he concluded.

Hon. Mr. Cotton.—I think the hon. gentleman can see that it was only asking a reasonable request in asking that such a matter as this should be brought on at the earliest possible moment. But if the hon. gentleman says he is not prepared to go on, I do not wish to put him to any inconvenience, and I will ask that if he is ready to go on tomorrow he should then, and not give two days' notice. I am not aware that the government made any such arrangement as he refers to, but I am willing to let the matter stand for a day.

The order was passed over.

Redistribution.

Mr. Kellie then resumed the adjourned debate on Mr. Joseph Martin's redistribution motion of want of confidence.

He said: "Yesterday the hon. member intimated that I had been 'put up' to adjourn the debate."

Mr. Martin.—I said I accepted Mr. Kellie's statement yesterday, and there is therefore no necessity to bring that matter up again.

Mr. Kellie remarked that if the House would look at the report of the matter in the Colonist, it would be seen that the hon. gentleman had accepted it in one way and not in another. He did not know what great effort it took to move the adjournment of a debate. It was not the first time that House that he had done so, and he had made the motion chiefly because he wanted to get some figures to show the facts, for bringing in redistribution bill was a move in the right direction. But he confessed that Mr. Martin was trying to make political capital for an election which he (Mr. Martin) expected to come in a very short time. If Mr. Martin had been brought on, and acted only by a desire for the good of the country, he would have approached the government privately and asked it to introduce a measure.

Mr. Martin.—I asked it publicly in this House half a dozen times.

Mr. Kellie.—Well, all right. In regard to this redistribution, when the matter was brought forward in the House two years ago he had pointed out to the government that a district from which one-third of the ordinary revenue came and which had 30 per cent. of the popu-

lation, had only one member. "In their generosity," said Mr. Kellie, "the late government gave us half a member in Kootenay to the two we had already."

(Laughter.)

Mr. Eberts (pointing to Mr. Green).—Excuse me, is that the half member there? (Loud laughter.)

Mr. Green rose and said: "Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of privilege. (Loud laughter.) I must insist upon the hon. member for Revelstoke taking that back. He must certainly put it in another way. I won't submit to being called a half member." (Renewed merriment.)

Mr. Kellie.—Well, Mr. Speaker, I had not reached that hon. member really yet, but I will take it back. (Laughter.) I am willing to admit that he is a whole member. What he wanted to point out was that the government cut up part of one of the Yale divisions and part of his old district and made it into a constituency, but had refused to give any increase. The then opposition had made a hard fight and at last the government had given this additional member for the Slokan (Mr. Green).

He said that he for one had always been in favor of a fair redistribution bill, and was in favor of it now, and he favored the government moving in that direction and bringing in a bill. "We could then have an election and fight the thing out on its merits, and let the best man win."

Mr. Martin.—Hear, hear. That is the thing.

Mr. Kellie.—I do not want a favor of any man, any government, or any person, but what we should have is another redistribution bill brought down on a fair basis, taking into consideration all the circumstances.

Hon. Mr. Semlin pointed out that was not the first time that such a measure had been discussed in this or previous Houses. It had come up repeatedly and had been well discussed. The members now sitting on the government side had when in opposition taken the ground that the redistribution of seats was not a fair thing to do. They were to do it on a fair and equitable basis, and did not succeed in giving a fair representation to all parts of the country. The Premier went on to refer to the idea which once prevailed that the Island and Mainland should be treated separately in regard to representation. He contended that earlier governments had had difficulties to meet in dealing with this matter. The present condition of the province was very different to what it was in the early days, and the government had in the arrangement of representation a difficult matter to deal with. 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