

procure for a new and untried stock a premium in the first instance; but now Baring Brothers are obtaining 5 per cent for it—and we will hereafter, if our public credit remains untouched, be enabled to make our Sales at a similar advance. But Sir, it has been calculated that the Saving Commissions on the sale and interest amounts to a premium of three per cent.

Hon. J. W. Johnston.—Have any Debentures been sold on account of the Province?

Hon. Attorney General—None whatever.

Hon. Mr. Johnston.—Then all the Debentures sold at 5 per cent advance have been on account of Messrs. Baring Brothers and Company alone?

Hon. Attorney General.—Yes! and I think no reasonable man can complain of the arrangement effected—advantageous as it is to the Province in every point of view.

After some discussion upon a proposition of the Hon. Solicitor General to limit the number of each Committee to 7, the house adjourned till 3 o'clock on Monday. W.

MONDAY, February 4.

The House met at 3 o'clock.

Hon. Attorney General reported from the committee appointed to prepare a list of committees. The report was read.

PUBLIC WORKS, &c.

Mr. Annand said—I have reflected upon the proposition made the other evening for the appointment of a committee of Public Works, and the more I think of it, the more advisable and necessary such a committee appears. We have now in this Province extensive public works—railways, canals, light houses, the Lunatic Asylum, and public buildings; but this House has no means at hand for ascertaining the extent of their progress, and the manner in which the gentlemen who hold commissions for controlling these works perform their onerous and responsible duties. Now, sir, although I have the highest and most implicit confidence in these gentlemen, I yet believe that they should give an account of their stewardship. The papers which will be furnished by the Commissioners of the Railway will not shew what progress has been made towards the completion of the various sections of the line under contract, nor the course pursued by them in obtaining these contracts.

Hon. Attorney General.—Although I am of opinion that the conduct of the public works mentioned by the hon. member for Halifax may safely be entrusted to the Commissioners, I quite concur in the opinion expressed by him, that the House should have the means of ascertaining what has been done—what policy has been pursued—what contracts taken—what payments authorised and made. That a committee should be appointed for this purpose, I am not at all inclined to controvert; but I am of opinion that there should be two committees, as the railway of itself would afford quite sufficient

work for the most intelligent committee that could be appointed. It must be understood; however, that this motion has been made, not by the instigation of the Government, but by the hon. member for Halifax entirely upon his own responsibility.

Mr. Marshall.—If the committee were only to perform the duties announced to them by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Annand), they would do little else than interfere with the duties appertaining to the committee of Public Accounts. If I apprehend the meaning of the proposed committee, its duties will not be so much to audit the accounts as to report upon the nature and extent of the works; in the case of the railway, its direction—what branch is to be first constructed—to Windsor, Pictou or Amherst,—and to report on the propriety of the action taken by the commissioners with respect to its construction. There is no difference of opinion as to the propriety of constructing the railway, but there may be much diversity as to the route which the line should follow, and the part to be first constructed. In this way the action of the committee may prove of real value; but if confined to the mere auditing the Commissioners' accounts, it will only interfere with the committee of Public Accounts, without being productive of any real advantage to the public or to the House.

Hon. Provincial Secretary.—The question refers simply to the appointment of a Committee and the propriety of confining its action to the Railway alone, or placing within their privilege the Saint Peter's Canal and other of our Public Works; when I advert to the immense comparative magnitude of our Railway engagements, I cannot but think that any committee would find sufficient employment in enquiring into and investigating the affairs of the Railway. It is true that we have by Law invested the Railway Board with almost unlimited power as to the construction of the Railway, but I cannot conceive that it was the intention to stop there. In my view, Sir, it was always designed that this House should have the power of instituting a strict, thorough and scrutinizing investigation into all the proceedings of the Railway Board. There is no subject which so deeply touches the welfare of this people as the mode in which this large expenditure of Public Money is conducted; all parties are interested equally, and I am of opinion that the appointment of such a Committee is very desirable and that their right of investigation should not be confined or limited to the mere auditing of the Accounts, but extend into the whole system of Railway management and all the proceedings of the Board from its creation up the latest possible period.

Hon. J. W. Johnston.—The subject is one of very considerable importance. One gentleman has thrown out the suggestion that the Committee to be now appointed should not only take the Accounts into consideration, but report the progress of the Railroad