

REPORT PRESENTED.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Hon. W. S. Fielding). I beg to lay on the table the report of the Auditor General for the year ending June 30, 1900.

Mr. WALLACE. What date?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. For the year ending June 30, 1900; with various notes and comments of a later date.

Mr. WALLACE. I thought it would be up to the 14th of February.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. The correspondence is up to a very recent date.

RAILWAY ACT AMENDMENT.

Mr. EDWARD A. LANCASTER (Lincoln and Niagara), moved the first reading of Bill (No. 4) to amend 'The Railway Act.' He said: This Bill relates to the liability of the railway company, in case cattle guards are not kept at highway crossings. At present, the law is that if an animal is at liberty, not controlled by a human being, and gets upon the railway from the highway, even though there is no cattle guard, the company is not liable. The object of the Bill is to make the company liable to keep up cattle guards, on the theory that these guards are needed for the purpose of preventing animals from being killed or injured when they are not in charge of a human being. If the animal is under the control of a human being, cattle guards are not necessary, because the human being will see to it that the animal is kept out of danger.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the first time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY—DISTRIBUTION OF AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. Before we proceed to the Orders of the Day, I would like, for one moment, to call the attention of the House to certain facts connected with the distribution of the Auditor General's Report which was laid on the table a moment ago. Technically, the report cannot be considered before parliament until it is laid on the table. But from the morning papers it is quite clear that the press must have received a copy of this report yesterday; and to-day, having seen a reference to the Auditor General's Report in a morning paper, I sent, both to the distribution office of this House and to the post office, to obtain a copy. I was informed through a page that the reports were ready and in the possession of the post office of the House, but they could not be distributed to the members, nor could I obtain a copy until the report was laid upon the table of the House. Now, while that may be technically right, there

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

seems to me to be no reason why that rule should not be broken in favour of a member of parliament as well as of a member of the press. I do not in the slightest begrudge the press who have received a copy, but it is as straight a violation of any rule as would be handing it to a member, on application, in the House. I certainly think that the members of the House should receive this public document at least as soon as the members of the press.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Hon. W. S. Fielding). My hon. friend's point seems to me well taken. But I really cannot give him any explanation of how that document was given to the press. I can only say that yesterday afternoon, very soon after the adjournment of the House, the Auditor General sent the report to my office. It had been his purpose to lay it on the table during the afternoon if the House had continued in session, but owing to the early adjournment he was not able to do so. I was as much surprised as my hon. friend when I saw some statement attributed to the Auditor General's Report appearing in a morning paper. I am afraid I will have to look elsewhere for information as to how it was obtained, for I have no knowledge of it. I think the hon. gentleman's point is well taken.

Mr. MACLEAN. Before the Orders of the Day are called, I wish to say that if the House is moved into supply, I will not go on with the motion of which I have given notice, for the reason that there is a large number of members who wish to take part in that discussion, and they are away from the House to-day. But I let my notice of motion stand.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I think that is no reason why government business should be delayed, although of course we would be glad to discuss the hon. gentleman's motion. I move that the House do now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). I thought the understanding was that we should not proceed with supply to-day for the reason that the Auditor General's Report is not in possession of the members of the House, even at the present time. I have not received a copy of it, nor have the hon. gentlemen around me.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Of course I understood in our conversation on the subject yesterday that a portion of the afternoon would have been occupied by the motion of my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Maclean), who has now laid it aside for another day. I supposed, moreover, that the Auditor General's Report would be on the table, if not in the hands of the members, for some time before the motion of supply was made. But if my hon.