

## BIENNIAL LEGISLATION.

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A 'CRY' has gone forth against the cost of local governments, and a portion of the public, composed of those who have taken but little pains to inform themselves upon the subject, has apparently arrived at the conclusion that money may be largely saved by an abbreviation of the time annually occupied by our representatives in law-making. An attempt has been made to meet this cry, in the suggestion that the cost of legislation may be decreased by restricting it to every second year, unless when declared to be of an urgent character by a majority. This phase of the question is practically before the people of Ontario at the present moment. The average length of a Session, under existing arrangements, is two months. To suppress all legislation every other year, might reduce the length of the Session in that year, to thirty days, although this is, by no means, certain. Discussion could not be largely cut off, and it would take place upon the Address, and in the Committee of Supply, at a greater length than now. It would be possible to dispense with the action of Standing Committees, in the fallow or barren year, to some extent; but the work hitherto done by them would be transferred, in many particulars, to the Committee of the Whole. The acts of the Executive would not be less closely scrutinized and criticised than now; and although day sessions were resorted to as part of the scheme, not more than five days per week, twenty in the month, could be conveniently devoted to Parliamentary work. Men would

still air their crotchets, and advocate the reforms which they deemed important. Motions, asserting the advisability of legislation, would take the place of Bills. The Public Accounts Committee, now discharging its duty through the agency of half a dozen working members, would find its old-time labours engrossing the attention of fifty enquiring minds. Notices of Motions, asking for all sorts of returns, and forming the text for numerous attacks, would bristle upon the Paper, and lead to debates, as lengthy as those at present indulged in. There would be little if any saving, other than of the fortnight of hard work, which distinguishes the end of every Session, and is given to its legislation.

But is it probable that, in any one year, legislation would be wholly thrown aside? In a new country, new wants, new ideas and new men are constantly coming to the front, and must be attended to. To be able to say 'Nay' under such circumstances, requires a Premier made of sterner stuff than that of which ordinary politicians and party leaders is composed. Nor is it possible seriously to minimize Private Bill legislation without granting to the Executive of the day an enormous increase of power. To check facilities for the promotion of private enterprises, more often of public than of private importance, must be regarded as impolitic and intolerable. It compels the enactment of a general law under which such enterprises may obtain more speedy recognition than Biennial Legislation affords;