

really see the tide of emigration turned, at least to some extent, into this country. If the Local Legislatures do nothing else, they will have accomplished immense good for the Dominion if these efforts succeed in adding to any considerable extent to the settlement of the country.

For many years to come the Local Legislatures are likely to attract as much attention and interest as those of the larger representative body which meets at Ottawa. The questions which are under their jurisdiction are quite as important as those which come under that of the Federal Parliament, and the subjects are such (as a general rule) as more nearly concern the people. The great bulk of the private legislation of the country will come before the Local Houses. This fact alone will cause their proceedings to be watched with much interest. If this country should ever become independent, and have to manage its foreign relations then paramount interest will be centered in Ottawa; but until then, Toronto and Quebec will be formidable rivals to the capital in the matter of legislation.

With the meeting of the Local Legislatures of Ontario and Quebec the whole of our new Government machinery has been put in motion. The start, in all cases, has been favourable. Up to this time all these representative bodies have manifested moderation and prudence, from which the best results may be augured. We are glad to notice this disposition among our public men, and we trust it may be accepted as an earnest that our new Constitution will be found all that its advocates claim for it.

#### ONTARIO SPEAKS OUT.

SOME time ago we enquired what Ontario would do on one of the great questions of the day—Immigration and free grants. These perhaps are two questions, but for all practical purposes they may be treated as one. Well we are glad to hear Ontario speak out. She has taken the earliest opportunity of doing so, and what she says gives earnest of her good intentions and promise of a hopeful and prosperous future. His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor in his speech from the throne in which the policy of the Government is contained, earnestly urges upon the attention of the local legislature the expediency of encouraging immigration and the occupation of the public lands of the Province by affording to the working population of Europe and to the young men of our own Province additional inducements to settle in this country. His Excellency also recommends the enactment of a liberal homestead law and the adoption of a system of free grants of land to bona-fide settlers on the ground that these measures will prove of great advantage to the country.

Vague language, some one will say, perhaps. Fine words, another will repeat. But we are content. If the speech from the throne could be interpreted to mean that the ministry had no policy on immigration and free grants; that these subjects were to be left open questions, or that they found a place in the speech only for the sake of effect, then indeed there would be grounds for objection. We believe the Government are sincere, however. They know the good that will flow from immigration, they understand the benefits that will accrue from the occupation of our wild lands by teeming and industrious populations; they appreciate the advantages that would result if the working population of Europe set their faces towards the New Dominion and made Ontario their home; and they are acquainted with that great loss our country must sustain, when her bone and sinew is forced to seek new homes in the States, instead of being enabled by a wise and liberal policy to remain and enrich our own country.

We must therefore presume that the Ontario Government is sincere, and that their intention is to inaugurate a new era for immigration, and a new and liberal land policy. Let them do this, and the Legislature and the country generally will sustain them. They will also receive the applause of the other Provinces of the New Dominion, which in their turn must adopt a similar policy, if they do not desire to see Ontario grow to such enormous proportions as to overshadow them altogether. The adoption of a system of free grants to bona fide settlers, will doubtless be followed by the most happy consequences. An indiscriminate free grant system would be injudicious; because it would favour land speculating, monopolies, and jobbery. But a policy which holds out to bona fide settlers free grants of land will reflect the greatest credit on the Government, and will be productive of

the greatest good to the country. Nor will there be a scarcity of wild lands in Ontario to offer to such settlers. Of course it is in the North West Settlement that the great bulk of the prairie and wild lands of the Dominion lie. But Ontario, it is needless to say, is by no means populated to the utmost capacity of her public domain yet. At present settlement is confined to the narrow belt running along side of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. In the Western Peninsula the settlement it is true, branches out North, East, and West; but even there, there is room for a far larger population than that by which it is at present occupied. It is in our back country however that the greatest room for immigration is to be found. There we have a country bounded on the north by the chain of water communication reaching from Lake Huron to the Ottawa River, and from the Ottawa Valley to the St. Lawrence—containing twenty million of acres; and a great portion of it no doubt, is fit for settlement. We must also remember that the North Western boundary of Ontario is not definitely marked out; and when it is, it may be found that in that direction also abundant facilities exist for giving free grants of land to bona fide settlers. Ontario then if she is determined to carry out the happy policy she has announced, will not be cramped for means by which to put her good intentions into practice.

We are glad to perceive that the important subject of immigration has not been over-looked in Quebec either. In that Province too it has found a place in the speech from the throne, on the opening of the Local Legislature. Sir Narcisse Belleau calls the attention of the Legislature to the best means of developing colonization with a view to the interests of the Province of Quebec, and to those of the Dominion itself. Free grants are not spoken of, but the necessity is affirmed of fostering immigration. "One means of increasing our population," says His Excellency, "must be that of drawing hither and retaining amongst us the emigration of the British Isles, and of the continent of Europe, at the same time that we are facilitating the settlement of our own people upon the public lands." Free grants are not alluded to, and generally the language employed is not so satisfactory as that used at the opening of the Ontario Legislature, but it is something to know that the want of immigration is felt in Quebec, and that some steps will be taken to supply that want even if a partiality is manifested for a homogenous population.

There is but one other subject alluded to, namely—the enactment of a liberal homestead law. Such a law will be new in the Dominion; but it has been tried with the best results in the United States; and there is no reason why we should not follow a good example set us by our neighbours. There we believe, the homestead law on the statute books exempts the homestead and land of a farmer or settler to the value of a thousand dollars from seizure or debt. Before any one however, can take advantage of this law, he has to give certain public notice of his intention to come within its provisions, and then of course the public trust him at their peril. When it is known before hand that the party seeking credit has taken advantage of the act, and that in the event of his failure to meet his liabilities, his homestead and lands to the value of a thousand dollars cannot be made available, credit will be given cautiously, and business will be transacted on a sound basis. No doubt it is the intention to apply some such law to Ontario. Speaking now, we can only say that the object sought to be attained—namely, the encouragement of immigrants is good, and the principle of the bill is one that ought to receive a fair trial. A homestead bill will no doubt soon be laid before the Legislature.

#### RECENT LEGISLATION.

THE first part of the first Session of the Dominion Parliament, has not been conspicuous for the amount of legislation commenced or perfected. Very few measures except those of the Government were brought forward, the small number of private bills, as compared with those of previous Parliaments, being particularly noticeable. The cause of this decrease in private bill legislation is the fact that the subjects upon which unofficial members generally introduced measures, are mostly confined to the Local Legislatures, which bodies will have the largest share of this sort of legislation to perform. It must not be supposed from this, however, that the part of the Session just adjourned has been unimportant. Far from it. The measures have not been very numerous, but they have

been of unusual gravity, involving largely the future destiny of the Dominion, and authorizing the expenditure of at least twenty-five millions of dollars.

The two most important measures adopted by Parliament, are undoubtedly those relating to the Intercolonial Railway and the North-West Territory. Very seldom have questions of greater gravity come before a British Colonial representative body. Both required to have the fullest and most careful consideration, and we think it is somewhat to be regretted that the resolutions submitted by the Government were not placed before the House at an earlier period. We do not say this because we consider that Parliament has not acted wisely and well, but simply on the ground that questions involving so large an increase of the public debt, cannot have too thorough consideration.

The obligation resting on Government to construct the Intercolonial Railway, was recognized by all parties. No voice was raised against going on with the work. Some there were who spoke of its being hopeless ever to expect dividends from it, and, it must be confessed this is a rather disheartening feature with which to begin so great an undertaking. But everybody recognized the railway as being essential to Confederation, and that as without Confederation there could have been no railway, so without the railway there could have been no Confederation. The action of Parliament has authorized the Government to negotiate a loan of £4,000,000 sterling, £3,000,000 of which are to be guaranteed by the Imperial Government. It will be fortunate if the work is done for the \$20,000,000. We doubt if \$25,000,000 will complete it, and will not be surprised if it costs \$30,000,000. Four Commissioners are to manage the work, and great interest is felt regarding the selection which ministers will make. It was gratifying to learn that they proposed to select the Commissioners irrespective of political considerations, and it is to be hoped that gentlemen will be chosen whose knowledge of railway construction, and whose probity of character, are such as will guarantee to the public that the railway will be well and cheaply made. Above everything—this great intercolonial work should be preserved from the taint of jobbery. We believe there is a strong desire to avoid this, and we trust proper measures will be taken to guard against it.

There was some difference of opinion with regard to the Government policy on the North-West Territory and Rupert's Land. The result of the legislation is, that the Government will address the home authorities, praying that these immense tracts of land may be added to Canada, subject to any legal claims which the Hudson's Bay Company, the Indians, or any other person, may have against it. If the Imperial Government consents, which is every way probable, the Dominion Parliament will have power to make laws and govern the North-West precisely as it legislates for any portion of the territory at present belonging to the Dominion. The intention of the Government evidently is to get possession of the country first, and then square off accounts with the fur monopolists when circumstances are most favourable. When placed in possession, we do not think they will interfere with the trading rights of the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupert's Land, although that portion of the country known as the North-West Territory and which was still owned by France when the Company got their charter from Charles II., would be placed in the market for settlement. If the Company objected to this, they would have to bring an action against the Dominion in Courts which are to be established by our Government for the purpose, an appeal from whose decision would in all probability be made to the Privy Council of England, where the battle between the Company and the Dominion would have to be fought out. The Government has been authorized by Parliament to go on with this policy, but if the Company offer to compromise their rights for any certain sum, no bargain is to be consummated until the sanction of Parliament has first been obtained.

Several New Brunswick, and nearly all the Nova Scotian members,—as well as a few from Ontario and Quebec,—spoke against taking active steps to acquire this great territory at present. The necessity of consolidating our present Dominion, the danger of running too rapidly into debt, and the difficulties of defending, governing, and settling a new and extensive country, were urged in favour of delay. It was held that Great Britain ought to wipe off the Hudson's Bay Company's claim, (if it has any,) for it created that monopoly, and also establish a Crown Colony at Red River with which Canada might open up communica-