

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION.

which a comparatively poor country like this might very reasonably curtail without the slightest injury to the body politic.

It is quite right and proper that the Governments of the Province and of the Dominion should annually render to Parliament an account of their stewardship. It is equally necessary that the representatives of the people should retain a control over the annual expenditure; but we do not think it by any means follows that it is equally necessary that every session should be marked by a fresh batch of statutes.

Let any one take up the statutes of the Province from year to year, and he will see how very few statutes passed in any one session are of such a pressing importance that they could not just as well have been passed a year or two later without any injury whatever to the public by the delay.

In the neighbouring republic this plethora of legislation is also being felt, and in one of the States efforts are already being made to secure biennial sessions of the State Legislature in place of annual sessions; and we think it has already become a matter for serious consideration in this Province, whether a resort to some such expedient is not desirable in order to cut down the present lavish expenditure on legislation.

The present mode of payment of the members of our Legislative Assembly is a direct incentive to them to spin out the session with interminable wrangles about questions upon which the vote of the House is known to be foregone before they are opened. Bills are introduced to make a show of diligence, and a host of them are annually slaughtered in the concluding scene of the session, when the allotted time having been spent, every one is in a hurry to get off and end the farce.

It is not to be wondered at that a sys-

tem of constantly tinkering statutes is resorted to. The Municipal Act is no sooner consolidated than half a dozen statutes are brought in to amend it in various particulars. That is an Act which every member in the House feels competent to deal with. Other statutes fare almost as badly. As regards questions affecting any other branch of law or the procedure of the courts, nine-tenths of the members might as well be at their farms or behind their counters for all the good they are. Sometimes they may prove a positive evil by rashly foisting crude amendments into carefully drawn measures, thereby rendering them defective or obscure.

We are of opinion that it would be a great saving of money, and a great improvement in our system of making laws in this Province, if there were a session of the Assembly for general legislative purposes only once in every three years, and that at other times the Assembly should confine itself to passing the public accounts and estimates, and other matters connected with the financial affairs of the Province, and that, in the interval between the legislative sessions, a legislative committee should sit from time to time as might be necessary, for the purpose of carefully considering and devising all such new laws or amendments of existing laws as might be submitted to them, and putting them in such a shape as would in their judgment warrant their passage by the Legislature.

In order to provide for a case where there might be urgent and pressing need for legislation before the ordinary period arrived, it might be ordained that such legislation could take place, provided the legislative committee reported in favour of immediate action.

As to the composition of the legislative committee we have suggested, we think it would be desirable that it should not be confined to members of the House, because