THE SENATE

Tuesday, November 26, 1867

The Speaker took the Chair at three o'clock.

After routine.

REPORT OF PRINTING COMMITTEE

Hon. Mr. Simpson brought up the second Report of the Joint Committee on Printing, and after explaining that the printing for both Houses of the late Legislature of the United Provinces of Canada had been taken under contract by Messrs. Hunter, Rose & Co. at a very moderate price, and for a period expiring on 1st January, 1870; that the work had been satisfactorily performed, and also that the prices for paper furnished and the binding done had been equally satisfactory. As these contracts only expire on 1st January, 1870, although the Parliament of the Dominion might not consider itself legally bound to recognize them, yet as the services were rendered at prices which in the opinion of competent judges were extremely moderate, the Committee recommended that the House should charge itself with the obligation of continuing said contracts until their expiry. He would now move that the report be adopted.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell asked that before putting the question the report should be read.

The Speaker here read the report.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell begged to know the amount of expenditure which these contracts would involve, for from what he knew of printer's bills he would prefer being informed before committing himself to the acceptance of the recommendation, the amount in dollars, which the report meant.

Hon. Mr. Simpson could not tell with any precision the amount involved. The printing, as he had stated, was done by private contracts, not by the Queen's Printers. This contract was taken two years ago and was to last until 1870. The prices paid them were admitted by gentlemen from both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, acquainted with such work, to be extremely low, and in fact so low that it was impossible to get it done for less. The work had been done most efficiently, and an immense saving had been effected since this contract was entered into. When he (Mr. Simpson) had been placed at the head of the Printing Committee of this House some five or six years ago, he had found that the cost for printing previously had been some $180,000 a year, but the Committee had brought it down to $30,000, but he believed it was impossible to effect any saving upon the prices now paid, and hence it was that he had recommended the adoption of the report.

Hon. Mr. Steeves also explained that the contract was for five years and was to end in 1870. The Committee had not regarded the contract as legally or strictly binding upon the House, yet as the prices for which the work was executed were very reasonable, the work itself well done, and it might reasonably be supposed that the contractors had invested a considerable sum in preparing for the discharge of the duty they had undertaken, it was but equitable that they should be permitted to finish their contract.

Hon. Mr. Dickey said the House was indebted to the Hon. Minister of Fisheries and Marine for having called attention to the expense, and procured the explanations which had been given. If there had been really a saving, by employing the present contractors, of 500 per cent, it was to be hoped the same happy results would be attained in future.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell said he was rather taken by surprise at the summary mode about to be pursued with respect to a report of Committee, which had only been in the Speaker's hands a few moments, and of which he (Mr. Mitchell) had never heard before. He had heard the names of Hunter & Rose, Desbarats, and some one else, and remembering from what he had seen in the Blue Book of Canada in former times, the enormous sums paid for printing, he was not prepared to adopt the report without some explanation. He would now ask whether the report had respect to any other printing than Hunter & Rose's.

Hon. Mr. Simpson—It had not.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell—Well, one of the honourable members who had given explanations had said the Committee did not consider the House strictly bound to recognize the contract with Messrs. Hunter & Rose, but he (Mr. Mitchell) held that the House though possibly bound morally, was not bound legally, to continue the contract. If any party was bound it was the old Province of Canada, not the Dominion. He held this House should commence right, and if an admission was made of being bound to carry on old contracts, such admission would act very detrimentally. He did not oppose the adoption of the report, for he had full confidence in the Committee, but