

## Governor's Warrants.

A CONSTITUTIONAL point of some importance was raised a few days ago in the House of Commons by Mr. Foster, ex-Minister of Finance. The late Parliament expired by efflux of time without voting the supplies for the fiscal year 1896-97, which began on the first day of July last. From that time until the meeting of the new Parliament, on the 19th of August, the public service had to be carried on, if maintained in working condition at all, by means of public funds which Parliament had not voted. Two ways of obtaining money were open to the Ministry—procuring an advance from the banks, and getting from the Governor-General a warrant to spend a definite sum out of the public funds. The latter method was adopted, and Mr. Foster moved a resolution condemning it.

It would be unprofitable to go into the details of the debate on this resolution, as it was made up largely of recriminations which had nothing to do with the merits of the case. It would be equally unprofitable to attempt to place the responsibility for the failure to vote supplies where it rightly belongs, for each party blames the other. It is of more importance to bring clearly into view the issue involved, and to note what instruction the whole incident affords for future guidance. Fortunately all are agreed that authorizing expenditure by means of Governor's warrants is a dangerous impairment of Parliamentary control over the public funds, and the recent discussion will tend to make the resorts to it rarer in the future than they have been in the past.

The question is partly a matter of Statute law and partly one of constitutional practice. If no provision had been made by the Audit Act for the issue of Governor's warrants, that is if the requirement that public expenditures must be carried on under Parliamentary authority had been made absolute, then the issue of the warrants in question would have been illegal. Provision having been expressly made for the issue of such warrants under exceptional circumstances, Sir Oliver Mowat, as Minister of Justice, gave his opinion that there was nothing in the Act to prohibit the proposed action, and several eminent lawyers in the House of Commons took the same view. Mr. Dalton McCarthy, without giving any opinion of his own, accepted that of Sir Oliver, though with apparent reluctance. It is needless, therefore, to say anything further on this branch of the case, except that the language of the statute seems to be needlessly vague, and that it ought to be so amended as to make its meaning perfectly clear.

As regards constitutional practice there is ample room to question the expediency of what was done. Two warrants were issued, covering in the aggregate a sum so large that it has not been all spent yet, though Parliament has been in session more than three weeks. Moreover, the expenditures authorized were quite varied, while it would have been better to limit the authorization to those that were absolutely necessary, such as the salaries of civil servants, and progress estimates on contracts where the wages of contractors' employees would otherwise have remained unpaid. The issue of the warrants was sure to become a dangerous precedent in any case, and it ought to have been made as little dangerous as possible by limiting the sums asked for to what was absolutely necessary in the public interest.

The debate made it perfectly clear that the issue of Governor's warrants has of late years become surprisingly frequent. Some of them have been for expenditures that were certainly foreseen, and others have been issued while Parliament was actually in session and in a position to make

the necessary appropriations. It is not at all likely that the circumstances which led to the issue of the last two will ever be paralleled in this country, but people remember precedents while they forget the circumstances under which they happened. If the present Finance Minister wishes to forestall any bad consequences that might follow the new precedents he has created, his best policy will be to prevent at all hazards any further resort to Governor's warrants.

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## Gold Mining in Ontario.

SO much is being said in the daily journals of Toronto and other towns and cities of Ontario on the gold mines of British Columbia that many people are apt to overlook the fact that there are also gold mines in their own Province, and that here, as well as in British Columbia, there may be promising opportunities for the employment of capital and labour in the development of potential wealth out of dormant resources. Whoever has any doubt on this point might find a satisfaction in looking over and comparing the many samples of ore which have, during the past and the present week, been on exhibition in our great Industrial Fair. In the Canadian Pacific Railway's building there has been put up a very fine display of the ores of British Columbia, massive in size and metallic in lustre, and side by side with them a smaller and less imposing display of the ores of Ontario. In the Natural History building there was another collection, put up by the Bureau of Mines, to illustrate principally the gold ores of Ontario; although here as well as in the C. P. R. building there were large and showy specimens of the copper and nickel ores of our Sudbury district. These latter were very interesting in one particular, viz.: in the close resemblance which they bear to the gold ores of British Columbia. Both are sulphide ores, having sulphur and iron in chemical union; but they differ in the accompanying metals which enter the compound, the one carrying nickel or copper, or both these metals, and the other gold only. Both ores, too, require very much the same kind of treatment. The component parts can only be separated by chemical treatment, and for this purpose fire is one of the most effective agencies, the ores being smelted in a furnace. But this is only the beginning of the business, and it is only by many refinings that the more precious metals of nickel and copper or gold are finally won. This means, of course, the employment of large and costly plants, as well as the service of skill of high order, and it goes without saying that there are but few mines anywhere which can support a plant of their own. Ordinarily a million dollars is a small sum for equipping such a plant, if it is designed to carry on all the operations and processes of mining, smelting and refining, and the ore must be rich to stand all the charges and leave a margin for profits when the product is brought down to bullion. There is little doubt, however, that in some, if not in all the mines of British Columbia there are such ores, and where ample capital is found there is no doubt but some, if not many of them, will become dividend-paying mines. But with most of the Ontario gold ores, as any skilled metallurgist would readily see who examined the various lots of specimens in the Natural History building, the process of treatment is very much simpler and cheaper, as well as more expeditious. They are known as free-milling ores, because a very large proportion if not the whole of the gold which they carry is not chemically united with other mineral substances. Often 80 to 90 per cent. of it is free, and may be won by the simple process of stamping and amalgamation,