

very large majority, the Insolvent Act which had been on our Statute-books from 1869 to that time. For my part, I have always held that it was desirable we should have some Act on our statutes which would provide for the equitable distribution of the assets of insolvent debtors; and whilst it is very true that under the Insolvent Act of 1869, and the amendments thereto, abuses arose, evils existed, and frauds were perhaps committed, my own opinion always has been, and it is still, that many of those frauds were perpetrated through the negligence of creditors themselves. It was not the fault of the Act, but the fault of the creditors who were lax in administering the Act. And, while it may be very true that dishonest people may take advantage of an Act such as that which is now proposed to be placed on the Statute-book, I think there are many honest traders, honest debtors who, from circumstances over which they have no control, from fire or other causes, may have sustained losses that will render it necessary for them to endeavor to obtain a discharge from their creditors. While these causes exist, it is, in my opinion, desirable that there should be some Act upon the Statute-book by which these insolvent debtors, having given up all their property to their creditors, having given them everything they are possessed of in the world, should be entitled to a discharge; and, whilst it may be very true that honest debtors generally meet with consideration at the hands of a majority of their creditors, there are always some creditors who find it in their interest to hold out in order that they may be paid in full, while the majority are willing to take a dividend upon the debts owing to them. It is true that in the Province of Ontario, and, I believe, also in the Province of Quebec, there are local statutes which provide for the distribution of the assets of a person who may have been sued and may be insolvent, but, so far as my experience goes, at any rate in the Province of Ontario, I do not think that that Act has been a success, that is, I believe that in that Province it has not been found to work in such a manner as to distribute equitably amongst the creditors the assets of the insolvent debtor. I have not looked into this Bill with sufficient carefulness to say that the whole of the provisions would meet with my approval, but certainly the principle of the Bill does meet with my approval, and I shall vote that the Bill be referred to a committee, whether the Committee on Banking and Commerce or a select committee of this House, in order that they may examine its provisions and report a Bill which will meet, if possible, with the approval of a majority of the House.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the second time.

COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Mr. McCARTHY moved second reading of Bill (No. 30) to amend the Companies Act.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the second time.

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S WARRANTS.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. The motion that I propose to make is as follows:—

That the several items stated to have been paid under warrant from the Governor General for the service of the year 1886-87 be referred to the Committee on Public Accounts.

And, after what occurred in the previous discussion, I propose to add:

Together with copies of the several reports and Orders in Council under which the same were appropriated.

Before I put that motion in your hands, I will take the opportunity of calling the attention of the House to one or

two statements which were made on this subject, which I had not the opportunity of replying to. In the first place, I may say that it might have been as well probably if the hon. gentlemen opposite had followed the wise example of the Minister of Finance, who frankly declared that he thought the practice had been carried to an objectionable extent, and who did not attempt to defend it. It has been attempted to defend the practice on the grounds, not that the arguments that I used were uncalled for or unnecessary, but apparently on the grounds that Governor General's warrants had been used in previous years. It is quite true that the Governor General's warrants were used in previous years, and were used under circumstances which I think I will be able to show to the House were amply justified by the Statute. But the Minister of Finance was in error, I think, when he stated that I, when Finance Minister, had omitted to bring down proper reports to the House on the occasion on which those warrants had been used. I have not been able to get the Votes and Proceedings for the year 1875, but I see that in 1876, one of the years which the hon. gentleman alluded to, on the 14th February, apparently, I laid on the Table of the House a statement showing the expenditure of \$34,000, appropriated for Treaty No. 4, by Order in Council of the 27th September, 1875, for which a special warrant was issued, which I presume was a Governor General's warrant; also a return of expenditure of \$30,000, by Order in Council, for the North-West Mounted Police; also statement of expenditure on a warrant of His Excellency the Governor General, dated the 5th October, 1875, for \$60,000 for the settlers' relief in Manitoba. These were the occasions on which apparently special warrants were issued in 1875, justified, I think, all of them, under the Act to which I alluded, and, as the House will observe, not in all exceeding the sum of \$130,000 or \$140,000. At any rate, that statement for the year 1876 disposes of the question whether or not a proper return was made. Now, in 1877, when the hon. gentleman stated that he could not find that I had made any return of these special warrants, I find that, under date of the 15th February, I laid before the House the statement of expenditure to date on account of New South Wales exhibition, under authority of special warrant of His Excellency the Governor General, dated 21st December, 1876, for \$25,000, a charge which I think was necessary, which could not well have been foreseen at the early date at which our House was prorogued in the year 1876, and which, at any rate, disposes effectually of the question as to these two years. For the succeeding year, the evidence is before the House that a proper statement was made. Now, I will further call attention to this fact. In the year 1878, when the largest number of these warrants was brought down by us, the whole of these warrants were for lapsed balances except two items, one of \$50,000 and one of \$30,000. To the one of \$50,000, caused by the great fire at St. John, no exception, I think, will be taken. To the other of \$30,000 in the North-West Territories, all I can say is that I do not think it was a case in which it was possible, without injury to the public service, to defer the completion of the buildings. But in no one of these cases did the hon. member who is now Finance Minister challenge any of the expenditures. Now, the House will notice that in these three years to which I have alluded—I have not got the returns for 1875, but I have just read the returns for 1878—the Governor General's warrants were exceedingly carefully used; three warrants, amounting to an aggregate of \$140,000, were used in one year, one warrant of \$25,000 was used in another year, and with the exception of the lapsed balances of appropriations carried forward, only two warrants for \$80,000, collectively, were used in the last year. In the present case we find that whereas, almost the whole of the items appropriated by me, or carried forward by me, were lapsed balances, according to the state-