

Mr. WELSH. Mr. Speaker,——

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. If my hon. friend will allow me to interrupt him for a moment, I will say that either this Bill can be read a second time now and this discussion renewed on Tuesday when we go into committee, or we can adjourn the debate. It is not worth while, in view of what is on the paper, to come back again to-night.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. I will not object to that on condition that the hon. gentleman will consent that the motions which stand on the paper for Monday in my name may be taken up on Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case may be, as I shall be absent on Monday.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Yes, certainly.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the second time.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD moved the adjournment of the House.

Motion agreed to, and House adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MONDAY, 2nd May, 1887.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

PRAYERS.

### FIRST READINGS.

Bill (No. 43) to incorporate the Niagara River Bridge Company.—(Mr. Rykert.)

Bill (No. 44) respecting the Atlantic and North-West Railway Company.—(Mr. Rykert.)

Bill (No. 45) further to amend the Act respecting the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.—(Mr. Rykert.)

Bill (No. 47) to amend the Railway Act.—(Mr. Popo.)

### ELECTIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Mr. EDGAR moved for leave to introduce Bill (No. 46) to amend the Dominion Elections Act.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. Will the hon. gentleman be kind enough to give us some idea of the provisions of this Bill?

Mr. EDGAR. The provisions of the Bill are such as I hope will commend themselves to all hon. members who have recently gone through an election contest, as their experience must have convinced them that a good many provisions of the law required improvement. One provision of the Bill is to ensure greater secrecy of the ballot. There is no use having the ballot at all unless it is a secret one, and I found, from my own experience in voting, in a good many places, as well as from what has been told me by others, that the ballot paper used was so thin and flimsy that the voting by ballot was not by any means secret, owing to the fact that the pencil mark made on the ballot showed plainly on the other side, and could be seen by the deputy returning officers, the agents, the poll clerks, and everybody else. Another little defect has been mentioned to me, and it is this: that in some places a rough board has been provided for a desk or table on which to have the ballot marked, and when this is the case, no matter how thick the paper is, it is apt to show the pencil mark on the other side. I therefore suggest that a hard and smooth surface be provided, as well as a certain thickness

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of paper. I have made enquiry at the Stationery Office as to the qualities and weights of different papers, and I find that a change to a suitable quality of paper to obviate this difficulty will involve so trifling a difference in cost as to be hardly worth mentioning. Then it is well known that a good deal of difference of opinion has existed between lawyers, as to whether deputy returning officers and poll clerks had a right to vote at the last election. I know that very eminent lawyers have disagreed upon that point, and, therefore, I propose to insert a provision declaring that these officers shall have the right to vote, thus preventing any possibility of disqualification in that way. Then, it is also alleged that abuses have prevailed in some cases by the improper use of certificates given to agents by returning officers. It is alleged that a large number of such certificates have been improperly given by deputy returning officers to persons alleged to be agents. I propose that only two certificates of this kind may be given——

Mr. BOWELL. The deputy returning officer has no power to give them.

Mr. EDGAR. No, it is the returning officer who gives them.

Mr. BOWELL. The only reason I interrupted the hon. gentleman, was because I understood him to say that the deputy returning officers gave these certificates.

Mr. EDGAR. I did say so, but it was a slip of the tongue. It is the returning officer who gives them out, but the deputy returning officer takes the votes, and some of them have so understood the law that they thought it was proper to accept a great many certificates in some cases, and that certainly was not the intention of the law. Then, the law as it stands provides that each deputy returning officer and the poll clerk, after counting up the votes, and before putting their final statement into the ballot box, shall take an oath as to the accuracy of their proceedings. The deputy returning officer must take it before either the returning officer himself or a justice of the peace, which implies that he must keep a justice of the peace on hand at the poll, or else he cannot comply with that provision of the Act. I am sure I do not see how it has been done in the absence of a justice of the peace. The poll clerk is allowed to take his oath before the deputy returning officer, so that in his case there is no difficulty. I propose the simple change, which is at present the law in Ontario as well as in Quebec, that the deputy returning officer may take that oath either before the returning officer or a justice of the peace, as hitherto, or before the poll clerk, so that there will be no excuse for keeping the ballot box open until a magistrate can be obtained. I think these amendments will commend themselves to the House.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the first time.

### SECOND READINGS.

Bill (No 22) to incorporate the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers.—(Mr. Shanly.)

Bill (No. 23) to incorporate the Emerson and North-Western Railway Company.—(Mr. Watson.)

Bill (No. 25) to amend the Act to incorporate the Brantford, Waterloo and Lake Erie Railway Company.—(Mr. Sutherland.)

### IMPORTATION OF DISEASED CATTLE.

Mr. MADILL, in the absence of Mr. SMITH (Ontario), asked, Is it the intention of the Government to prohibit the