

consideration by each House, and while the committee are deliberating we will introduce a Bill, in anticipation of the result of their labors, in order to avoid delay. On the whole the hon. gentleman's procedure is highly objectionable, and I cannot, for my part, assent to his motion.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I cannot see the force of the hon. gentleman's objection to the committee, and it seems to me that he is losing sight of the spirit of the connection between the two Houses when he talks of their being no precedent for this action. There may be no precedent for the consolidation of the Statutes of England and for a joint committee acting between the two Houses on that subject. There never has been a consolidation of the laws of England, and there never will be; and this the hon. gentleman knows. The report speaks of the hopelessness of there ever being such a consolidation. But there is no analogy if the question had arisen, and if it had been decided, that it was not expedient that there should be a joint committee on the matter of consolidation. Why, the Statutes cover centuries in England, from the time Simon de Montford until now, for the Statutes of England have been constant consolidation of particular branches of legislation and form a mass of original Statutes amended and reamended, repealed, and some consolidated and some readjusted, and so the idea of consolidation has been given up altogether. But the hon. gentleman gives away his whole case when he says there are subjects on which, profitably, the two Houses can appoint a joint committee. They can appoint a joint committee on matters affecting the privileges of this House, with relation to the two independent Chambers, with relation to the common practice of the two Chambers. Those are more important subjects than the consolidation of our Statutes, which fortunately cover only a few years. It is happy for us that we shall so early in the life history of this Confederation have a consolidation of the Statutes. But not only are the statements he cites an argument for a joint committee upon joint business, but it is admitted that there are certain classes of subjects with which a joint committee can deal. One class is as good as another class; but there is the case in which a joint committee sat for the purpose of settling the railway policy of all England. The hon. gentleman may say that those are private Bills to settle private rights. They are not so. They were railway Bills, and they were considered by a joint committee for the purpose of settling legislation as to the means of transport and the great commercial avenues, dealing with not only private rights, which constitute a small portion of the subject, but dealing with the rights of the people and settling the principle of general legislation in regard to the general railway system of the country, which is a question of much more practical importance than any question about the comparative dignity of the two Chambers, or the privileges of the two Chambers. The question is not whether there is any precedent for a joint committee on the consolidation of the Statutes, but whether there is any precedent against it or any principle against it. We have precedents, as the hon. gentleman has shown, for a joint committee on certain subjects of legislation. I say this is a very fitting subject for a joint committee to deal with, one on which they can sit for the purpose of looking over this elaborate work. The hon. gentleman says that this joint committee is moved for because the Minister of Justice happens to be in the other Chamber. I am not going to discuss the question, which the hon. gentleman has dragged in, as to whether the Minister of Justice should sit in this Chamber. Some of the Ministers must be in the other Chamber, and it is generally considered in England that those Ministers who are not connected with the spending departments and the collection of revenues should sit in the House of Lords. So the Lord Chancellor is the legal member of the cabinet and presides in the Upper House;

Mr. BLAKE.

the precedent is exactly the same. To be sure we are not so fortunate as to have two legal officers; the Attorney General in England sits in the Lower House and—

Mr. BLAKE. And the solicitor.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. That is true.

Mr. CAMERON (Victoria). But neither the Attorney General nor the Solicitor is a member of the Cabinet.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. No, they are subordinate officers. But I have no doubt if we proposed to have an Attorney-General, in addition to the Minister of Justice, that every Grit paper from one end of the Dominion to the other, would charge us with extravagance in making another officer. I have no doubt of it. The hon. gentleman speaks of precedents. I adhere, as a Conservative, as strongly to precedents as he does, and I think a little more strongly, but I do it on principle and not on mere incidents. It happens that there is a precedent for the consolidation of the Statutes, and it happens that there may be joint committees of the two Houses, acting on such a report in the manner we propose. The hon. gentleman says there is an attempt to give up the responsibility of the Government by the fact of the Minister of Justice moving the committee first, because he was in the Upper House. Well, if the Minister of Justice had been here, and not in the Upper House, the only consequence would have been that it would have been moved in the Lower House and a Message would have been sent to the Upper Chamber, instead of its being moved in the Upper Chamber and a Message sent to the Lower. In either case a joint committee would be of great value. The Government assumes the whole responsibility; they know their responsibility as well as the hon. gentleman can point it out. I was in the Government at the time, as Attorney-General for Upper Canada, when the consolidation of the Statutes for Upper Canada took place, and on the responsibility of the Government I carried through that great measure then; and holding the position I do now I intend to take the responsibility; the whole responsibility will rest on the Government. The Bill, if it receives the sanction of the House, will get a second reading, and then it is for the House to say whether they will go into Committee of the Whole or send it to a select committee. If this committee makes a report and the House thinks it will do away with the necessity of having a special, or rather two special committees, one first in this House and the other in the other House, that joint committee will look through the whole Act and settle its terms, and if the House thinks we should have a special committee the House will grant it, and there is an end of it. In the meantime there is no more harm but great use in the committee sitting and looking over the report—there is no more harm than in the original commissioners making a report. They made a report, the purpose being that experts should be chosen to consolidate the Statutes. The hon. gentleman might as well say that the issuing of the commission at all was a shirking of the responsibility of the Government. He might say it was the Government's business, that the Government should have consolidated them, that they should have prepared a measure, that they should not have handed it over to a commission. The absurdity of that proposition will address itself to every mind in the House. So in the same way, this joint commission, carefully selected, composed of gentlemen who are experts, who are experienced, intelligent, and who represent legal opinion—men who have been selected from the various Provinces of the Dominion—if they make a report we will have that report before us. It does not bind this House. They may set it aside, they may disagree with it altogether, they may insist on appointing a special committee of their own to look into the matter, but in the meantime it would be no harm to have