

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD: Does the hon. member for Shelburne (Mr. Coffin) say that he never came to speak to me on the subject?

Mr. ROSS (Victoria): I may say that two or three of us went to see the Ministers next day and stated that unless they promised a Committee themselves that was the last vote they would get from us.

Mr. CHURCH: I accept that statement. We saw the Hon. Mr. Mitchell on the following day and said the charges were very serious affairs, and that a Committee must be appointed.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD: Thus we see another exemplification of the old story of the three Black Crows. (*Laughter.*) The hon. member stated that eight of my followers and supporters came to me and said that I must move that Committee. The hon. gentlemen say that they went to some one else, and I say, in the presence of my colleagues, that I myself went down to the Council and before having met or agreed with any single member of the Council, I said to them on going into the Council Chamber—“Gentlemen, I have made up my mind that on the first opportunity that presents itself I will move for a Committee to inquire into this matter.” (*Cheers.*)

I had had no communication with any member of the Government; no communication with any member of the House; no communication with any one in or out of the House, and therefore you can understand how guarded the hon. member for Lambton (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie) should be in giving publicity to other men’s affairs. He may perhaps have a vacancy in his memory. There is something, Abercrombie says, which leads men not only to forget certain facts and to state things as facts that never occurred. At all events, whether I was waited on by the eight members or not, I shall produce the hon. gentleman the report about the eight members before the night is over.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE: I don’t care about it.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD: I know you don’t. I know the hon. gentleman is quite indifferent about the evidence that I can produce. (*Laughter.*) At all events I came down to Parliament and gave my notice of motion. Now I wish the House carefully to consider the circumstances under which I made my motion. I was of course exceedingly anxious that Sir Hugh Allan should succeed in his mission to England, and that the Pacific Railway should be preceded with without delay. I was anxious that no blow should be struck in this House for Party or any other purpose that could injure the prospects of these men in England, and yet I did not desire that there should be any undue delay in this inquiry, which affected the honour of hon. gentlemen and myself.

Now it must be remembered that my motion having been unanimously adopted by the House, was not only my motion, was not only my vote, but was also the motion and the vote of hon. gentlemen who were then members of this Parliament. I considered

at that time that the chances were infinitesimally small that these gentlemen would be back in time to go on with the inquiry before the prorogation of Parliament; and what did I move?

I moved “that a select Committee of five members be appointed of which committee the mover shall not be one,” and here, Mr. Speaker, I may perhaps bring in, *par parentheses*, a little remark. I moved that resolution as I thought that I, being one of the accused should not be a member of that Committee, and yet the hon. member for Shefford stated in a speech recently that if he had had his own way he would have been the Chairman of that committee; that he would have guided the deliberations of that Committee—he the accuser. The hon. gentlemen may think that I may have committed something like folly in this course, but, at all events, I moved that “a Committee of five members be appointed, of which the mover shall not be one, to inquire into and report on the special matters mentioned in the resolution of the hon. member for Shefford (Hon. Mr. Huntington), with power to send for papers and records, with power to report to the House from time to time, with power to report their evidence to the House from time to time, and if need be to sit after the prorogation of Parliament.”

I thought that by a mere lucky chance, by a mere fortuitous circumstance Sir Hugh Allan and his associates might perhaps raise the money, make the necessary arrangements and be back in time before Parliament was prorogued, and, therefore, I put in merely as an alternative that if need be the Committee could sit after Parliament was prorogued. I never thought for a single moment, it never occurred to my mind, that any man having a sense of justice would enter upon a trial of a matter, in the absence of those who were chiefly implicated, and perhaps you will say the Government were implicated, but at all events Sir Hugh Allan and Mr. Abbott were not only personally implicated, but their capital, their vested rights, their pledged faith were all interested in this inquiry, and I never thought any man would attempt such an effort of lynch law as to go on in the absence of Sir Hugh Allan, Hon. Mr. Abbott, and Sir George-É. Cartier; in the absence of all the evidence which these gentlemen could give on the subject of these charges.

I therefore, Sir, drew up the motion in the manner I have named, and I must confess that I am somewhat ashamed that my knowledge of Constitutional law should have been at fault; but I was anxious that the Government should not lie under the charges for a whole year, and I put that in the resolution in order that the Commission might sit from day to day during the recess, and if Sir Hugh Allan, Mr. Abbott and Sir George-É. Cartier arrived in this country that their evidence might be taken. This was my object in placing this clause in the resolution.

On the consideration we found that this House could not confer the power, and for a very substantial reason, because if this Parliament could appoint a Committee with power to sit during the recess it could also appoint a Committee of the whole House to sit during the recess, and thus the prerogative of the Crown to prorogue would be invaded, and Parliament as a committee of the Whole might sit indefinitely.