

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 2, 1868

The Speaker took the Chair at three o'clock.

ST. HYACINTHE ELECTION

Mr. Walsh, from the General Committee of Elections, reported the following as a select committee to try the St. Hyacinthe election:—Messrs. Bechard, Burton, Chamberlin, D. A. McDonald, and Pozer, Chairman.

YAMASKA ELECTION

Mr. Casault moved that the Yamaska Election Committee have leave to adjourn to the 16th instant. Carried.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Sir John A. Macdonald moved that leave of absence for one fortnight, on urgent private business, be granted to L. McCallum, Esq., a member of this House. Carried.

PENITENTIARIES

On motion of **Sir John A. Macdonald** the House went into Committee of the Whole, Mr. Cameron (Huron) in the Chair, on the Bill respecting penitentiaries and the directors thereof.

The first and second clauses were adopted.

Sir John A. Macdonald, in moving the third clause, stated that under the former Act there were five Prison Inspectors. This Bill provided for not more than three Directors, who would be in a great degree an administrative body, and at the same time perform all the duties of direction, consultation, and active supervision. One of these Directors would be a resident of the Maritime Provinces, and would have charge in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick without having to come to headquarters, except at certain periods, when the whole would meet for consultation.

Hon. Mr. Dorion suggested that it might be better to have but one Inspector; a superior man who would have an undivided responsibility.

Sir John A. Macdonald said with such an extent of country as we have it would be absolutely impossible for one man to do the duty of Director. Of course there would be an efficient man as Warden. If he and the Directors differed it would just be one opinion against another opinion. There was a great advantage in having a plurality of Directors for purposes of consultation.

Mr. Mackenzie thought there would be a risk of failure if only one man was appointed, unless he were a man of very superior attainments and judgment. He thought, however, two would be sufficient. If there were three, action would be taken in the vote of two against one. With two directors there would be the same guarantee for correct action, for both would have to agree. In a former debate on this Bill he had remarked on the desirability of the penitentiary being made more self-supporting. He found, on inquiring, that with regard to arrangements for contracting labour, the Warden had been entirely under the control of the Prison Inspectors; and that it would not be fair to blame him for any failure in this respect. It was a question whether it might not be advisable to give the Warden greater power in matters connected with the management of his own institution, either as a member of the Board to be created by this Bill, or on his own direct responsibility.

Sir John A. Macdonald said the Warden would give his advice, and all the benefit of his experience and assistance to the Directors; but to give him control of the contract for labour might expose him to charges of favouritism and collusion. The question whether there should be only two Directors, rather than three, was one worthy of consideration, and the Bill left the point discretionary.

The third clause was then adopted.

The fourth clause was then moved. It provided that two directors should be a quorum, and in case of difference of opinion at a meeting held in a Penitentiary in a matter referring to such Penitentiary, the Warden should decide between them.