

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—After a unanimous vote last year in favour of a committee.

Hon. Mr. MILLS—I have no objection to a committee.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—If so, I misunderstood entirely my hon. friend. He referred then to the question of a joint committee that was proposed in 1871, in England which has been referred to by the hon. leader of the House, and said that it was then settled, as far as the opinion of Mr. Disraeli and others was concerned, that the House of Lords should not properly form part of a committee to investigate that subject, and the reply which was made by Mr. Gladstone and others was, that as it was not an inquiry into the public accounts of the United Kingdom it was quite proper for the Lords to take part. My hon. friend, if I understood him right, seems to take the same ground to-day that he took last year, that it was conceded on all hands that the House of Lords had no right to enter into an investigation of the financial affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Hon. Mr. MILLS—Perhaps my hon. friend will allow me briefly to state my position. It is this—not that an inquiry should not be made into the affairs of the Drummond County Railway, but I say when the House is expressing a determination to inquire into the amount of subsidies granted, that the House is by that form of expression, and that declaration as to the object of the inquiry, encroaching on the jurisdiction of the Commons.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—That does not materially affect the manner in which I understood my hon. friend. He took the ground that this House of parliament had not a constitutional right to inquire into the Drummond County matter in the manner in which it is proposed to make the inquiry by the motion of my hon. friend the leader of the opposition in this House. I think my hon. friend has escaped a very important feature in regard to this question, showing its entire dissimilarity from the case that occurred in 1871 in Great Britain with regard to the inquiry into the financial administration of India. The proposal that was then made was an inquiry into the

general financial administration of India, and I agree with my hon. friend that all the speakers who took part in the discussion, both in the House of Lords and House of Commons, were agreed upon this, that the House of Lords had no right to introduce an inquiry or to take part in a joint committee in an inquiry into the general financial affairs of the United Kingdom. That point was settled; but it was not settled, it was not questioned, they did not enter into the discussion at all as to whether the House of Lords had or had not the right to inquire into particular expenditure in regard to the financial affairs of Great Britain and Ireland. That point was not reached, was not touched at all in the discussion. I have gone over the matter very carefully. I have extracts from the speeches then made in my hand, and I take the ground, and take it with all confidence, that the point was never reached, either in the House of Lords or in the Commons at that time as to whether the House of Lords had or had not the right to inquire into the expenditure of any special department, in the affairs of the United Kingdom; but apart from that—this is the only authority that is quoted—I can refer to an instance in our own parliamentary practice. I can refer my hon. friend, the leader of the House, to a case which occurred in 1870, when the Hon. Senator Wilmot, a member of this House, proposed a resolution. I have the remarks that were made upon that resolution, if I have not the resolution itself. It was a resolution that the Senate of Canada should appoint a committee to inquire into the general public accounts of the Dominion of Canada, and here is what Sir Alexander Campbell, the leader of the House, and a very eminent authority with regard to legal and constitutional questions generally, said upon that occasion:

He said he did not differ from the mover as to the power of the House to appoint select committees, but he did differ from him as to the power of such committees to deal with the general public accounts and expenditure. *The Senate could properly appoint a committee for a specific purpose, say, for instance, to examine into the expenditure on Rideau Hall, which had been alluded to by the mover, but they could not appoint a public accounts committee.*

The ground taken by Sir Alex. Campbell, which was properly taken, and with which we will all agree, was that it would not be proper for the Senate to appoint a public accounts committee to perform the work the