

a great incentive to perjury. A prisoner might also have peculiar reasons for not wishing to give evidence, and his silence would be construed into an admission of guilt.

Mr. KERR said he did not rise to express his views upon the question at any length, but rather to state that he was in sympathy very largely with the views of hon. members who had spoken against the proposition before the House. But, while he made that statement, he did not think he would be just to the hon. member who had brought the question before the House did he fail to express his high appreciation of the very full and able manner in which he had submitted that proposition. It was another lesson to him, as he believed it would be to other members, that on no question, however strongly their minds might be prejudiced in favour of a certain view, should they too fully make up their minds until they had heard all that could be said on both sides. He admired the pluck of the hon. member for North York who, had dared to rise and express views on that important subject with which a large portion of the House might not be in sympathy, and it was perhaps well that it fell to the lot of the hon. member to bring the subject before the House. But while he made that declaration, he was not in favour of the measure which was proposed for their consideration. He shrank from the very thought of too frequently interfering with our laws, more especially with the criminal laws of the country. They were a rich inheritance from the mother country, and it appeared to him that it would be prudent on the part of the Canadian Parliament to follow in the tracks made by the mother country leading the way. The present Bill appeared to be brought forward in the interest of the accused. So far as his experience and observation went, he did not think that practically it would be favourable to that interest, but would prove rather to the detriment than to the advantage of the accused. He was confident that, in nine cases out of every ten, there would either be perjury committed, or, in the event of the accused not coming forward and giving evidence, the im-

Mr. DESJARDINS.

pression would be created that he was guilty of the crime with which he was charged. Although previous speakers had expressed their convictions that the law, as it at present stood in regard to civil cases, making the parties to an action or suit competent witnesses in his or her own behalf, had worked satisfactorily, there was no doubt of this unfortunate fact that one of the evils resulting from the law had had been the multiplication of cases of perjury. It was by no means a practice upon which all were united, but it was rather one upon which there was great room for difference of opinion, and on which great difference of opinion existed at the present time. But, if there was temptation for a man to commit perjury in civil suits where there was nothing beyond property involved, how much greater would be the temptation when both character and liberty might be involved. The time had not come when the House should adopt such legislation as was proposed. He was aware that the theories and speculations of to-day, in this age particularly, became the results of to-morrow; but in a matter of that importance Parliament should hasten slowly, and await the fuller discussion which would be given to the question in the Imperial House of Commons, and, as it should finally be decided there, so might this House decide in like manner. He, therefore, submitted that the question with many others of a similar character should be handed over to the serious and careful consideration of the hon. the Minister of Justice, who must of necessity be held responsible in an especial manner for the criminal laws of the Dominion.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD said it would be desirable that on such an important question the House should learn the views of the hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. BLAKE said he was obliged to state to his hon. friend the member for North York (Mr. Dymond), who had introduced the measure, that he was not in a position to recommend to the House the second reading of the Bill at this time. He thought the discussion of that evening would have convinced his hon. friend that the measure was