

February 23, 1871

away with the objectionable part of the motion of the member for Durham.

**Mr. GEOFFRION** said the objections of the Premier of Quebec would have some force if the question were a decision upon the events of the arbitration. The amendments were not premature. Information was not so much needed as pretended, for everybody, even so far north and west as Manitoba, knew the manner in which the decision was rendered. The simple question was as to the legality or illegality of that decision. After all the information elicited on this subject, the Dominion Ministers were unready to pronounce an opinion on the subject. He believed the decision illegal, and was ready to proceed with it at once, though so many other Quebec members were without any opinions thereon.

**Mr. DUFRESNE** replied to the charge of unreadiness directed against himself and other Quebec members. He was ready with his opinion, but other members were not, and preferred waiting for a better opportunity of expressing it, namely, when all the papers were brought down, and all the members were in possession of the facts.

**Mr. GEOFFRION** suggested to the hon. gentlemen an accommodation of their differences. Let him ask the member for Bellechasse to let his motion stand for the present, and he would probably do it.

**Mr. DUFRESNE:** Let him do it then.

**Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN** criticized and condemned the amendment of the member for Bellechasse, and argued in favour of the suspension of judgment and action on this question till all the papers were before the House.

**Hon. Mr. IRVINE** hoped his hon. friend, after he had heard this discussion, would withdraw his motion and re-introduce it at some more opportune time. Apart from the reasons given against the introduction of the amendment by the hon. member for Bellechasse, he thought it was hardly fair to ask this House to pronounce an opinion on the question without any notice whatever having been given, and introducing it, too, we might add, as a surprise to a motion which no one would have supposed would have led to an amendment of the kind. The motion was an unusual one, and was rarely tolerated by the House. He was far from admitting that this House was competent to settle the question at all—that it was the proper tribunal. He was certain even the movers of the amendments would not quietly submit to an expression of opinion upon a substantive motion contrary to the spirit of theirs. An appeal from a

decision of this Parliament, considered unjust by Quebec, would doubtless be sought.

**Hon. Mr. DORION:** What is the proper tribunal?

**Hon. Mr. IRVINE** was not called upon to decide; he was merely speaking as to the improper tribunal. He did not deny that an expression of the opinion of this House might be in order. So far as the award was to be acted upon by the Dominion Government—so far as they might have to treat it as legal or illegal—they would have to be responsible to this House for their action, and the House would pronounce upon it. He agreed with the amendments of the member for Joliette. They should certainly support the amendment to the motion of that hon. gentleman, so as to exempt the House from the expression of any premature opinion on the merits of the question. They should not ask the Government in any way to act on the award at present. He did not admit it was valid, nor did he believe any part of it should be recognized or treated by this House as legal. He hoped the hon. member for Bellechasse would consent to withdraw his amendment, which he must see could not possibly carry. (*Cheers.*)

**Mr. BLANCHET** argued that the motion was not at present in proper form, as it appealed to a House at present ill-informed, and it would be a great deal more prudent and in order if the hon. member for Bellechasse would withdraw his motion.

**Mr. FOURNIER** rejected the idea that want of information was any defence for the unreadiness of the hon. members to proceed with this question at present. Everyone in this House was well aware how the case stood at present. All the facts had been made public in both provinces. He was certainly determined to obtain an expression of the opinion of the House on his motion. The question was not asked of the merits of the arbitration, but as to whether a tribunal composed of three arbitrators could render a decision in the absence of one of the three, and whether the decision so rendered could be valid. He would not withdraw his motion, but he would not object to an adjournment of the debate if the House desired it.

**Mr. MACKENZIE** said it was now six o'clock, and as this debate would not be resumed after it, and as the two Bills on the paper were not printed, he did not see what was to be done after six.

**Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD** moved that the House adjourn until three o'clock next afternoon.

The House adjourned at six o'clock.