

February 21, 1871

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 21, 1871

The **SPEAKER** took the chair at three o'clock.

Prayers

THE CENSUS ACT

Hon. Mr. DUNKIN moved for leave to introduce a Bill, entitled "An Act to amend the Census Act."

In reply to Mr. Mackenzie, **Hon. Mr. DUNKIN** explained the nature of the Bill. It was therein proposed to bring in all the territory for census purposes, not now included in the Dominion. The census of British Columbia would thereunder be taken. That was to say, the Act should be extended to Manitoba and British Columbia. The same principle as to mode of procedure and details, now in operation as to the Dominion, would apply to those distant Colonies. With respect to the time of the census taking, it was provided in the Bill, that the census might be taken any time between the 1st of May and 30th of September next. It was physically impossible the census should be taken in certain remote regions, early in April next. Machinery was also provided for the collection of information at times apart from those occupied by the enumeration. Other changes of more or less importance—of detail—were provided for.

Mr. MACKENZIE said the provisions of the Bill were excellent. One matter was omitted. Was it intended to take the census of the North West Indians?

Hon. Mr. DUNKIN: Certainly. It was intended to obtain all the information possible respecting the Indians in our territory.

Mr. MACKENZIE said he was glad of that. He would regret that anything in our legislation should take place that would tend to place us in a false position towards the native inhabitants.

Motion carried, and Bill read the first time.

RETURNS AND STATEMENTS

Hon. Sir FRANCIS HINCKS brought down returns of all expenditure under the head of unforeseen expenses; of the expenses of Hon. Mr. Campbell's mission to England, and of all expenses, etc., connected with the exportation of the depreciated silver.

EXPORTATION OF AMERICAN SILVER

Hon. Mr. HOLTON remarked upon the absence of details in the statement respecting the coin; there was nothing to show the manner in which the expenses arose, or the parties therein concerned. Information as to the quality or purity of the coin was also desirable. The mere gross or summary statement was not sufficient. The return did not comply with the terms of the Address ordering it.

Hon. Sir FRANCIS HINCKS said with regard to the fineness of the silver in the new coinage, the order in Council of 1867 had been quoted because it described exactly the fineness and value of the silver coinage, which was to be of exactly the same fineness as the British silver. The reference to that order in Council was made merely to establish the fineness. The actual order in Council was to the same effect and could be furnished if required. With regard to the details an agreement to pay at the rate of 1 1/2 per cent for all silver exported, was made in order to cover charges. It was calculated that at this rate, Mr. Weir would make a commission of 1/2 per cent out of the operation. It was thought to be safer to do this than to incur any risks. In point of fact, with regard to that portion of the silver exported, he (Hon. Sir Francis Hincks) happened to know that the principal bank engaged in carrying on the operation,—he referred to the Bank of Montreal—had increased their rate of commission. They would not go on at the rate they first agreed on with Mr. Weir. There were a great variety of liabilities and responsibilities to be incurred. For instance, sometimes, a package turned out to be short, or spurious coins were found in it. Mr. Weir's profit after paying all charges, amounted to five-eighths of one per cent. The express charges, the bank commission, the brokerage in New York and charges of that description were paid by the Government and charged to Mr. Weir in the account, making up this 1 1/2 cent he was to get. The only other charges were the charges in England, which were chiefly freight, and the Bank of Montreal commission and the expenses on the silver it was found necessary to send to England, owing to the impossibility of selling more in New York after the market there was glutted. He had not the slightest objection to bring down these returns, but he did not think it was necessary.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON said he supposed the matter would be referred to the Committee on Public Accounts and the details could be submitted there. The amount seemed to be very large to him—\$118,000—and it did seem to him that they should have the details of so large an expenditure furnished to the House. Part of that expenditure seemed to have been incurred in New York, part in England, and part in this country, but there was an entire absence of details as to names of persons to whom the money had been paid,