

But it was a very different thing when a minister rose and said that passing a certain motion would be injurious to the interests of the country. They would say the same, no doubt, of a motion of want of confidence. He did not feel that any such statement could deter him from voting for this motion.

Mr. Johnson could not agree with the Chief Commissioner of Public Works that they could get more correct testimony before a secret tribunal than a public one. He considered the great safeguard was to have the public eye upon the witness. This House could not try the case over again; but they had a right to know upon what principle it was discharged when before the Court of Enquiry. When fathers who have lost their sons upon the field of battle ask for information, shall it not be given? We are asked why we do not give some grounds for our application for these papers. The case is taken before a secret tribunal and the evidence is locked up. How then can it be expected that grounds will be furnished. To require them is not according to Parliamentary usage or public justice. If these proceedings were pending, it would be improper to give these papers; but after these proceedings are ended, unless the Government are prepared to say that an injustice would be done to the public service, the House has a right to the evidence.

Mr. Pope understood his honourable friend to say, as the papers were locked up, and the evidence was in the possession of the Government how could they make a case out? He (Mr. Pope) would ask, where were the fathers who have lost their sons on the battlefield who are dissatisfied with this Court of Enquiry? Why does not the honourable gentleman who made this motion, say the people call for this motion, and he wants the papers brought down to base some action upon them? The honourable gentleman has told us that he did not intend to pursue the case any further, but he asked for the papers because the people in that section of the country were dissatisfied, from some cause or other, with the Court of Enquiry. They wanted to have the evidence published in order to have their curiosity satisfied. He (Mr. Pope) admitted the right of the people's representatives to enquire into every such case; but if there was no object in view, he would oppose the motion.

Sir John A. Macdonald said that not a gentleman who had spoken on the subject was willing to take the responsibility of bringing up the charge against Col. Dennis.

That officer had asked for a Court of Enquiry, and that Court had acquitted him. There was not a case now before the country. No complaint was made by any person, not even by the mover of the motion. The ground he (Sir John) took was, that it was inexpedient and against the interests of the volunteer and militia organization to grant this motion, unless a strong case was made out. He cited instances in English history to prove that the proceedings of Courts of Enquiry should be kept secret. There might be a feeling among certain people to have the evidence in this case made public, but they should not allow this feeling to lead them to establish wrong precedents which would be quoted as authority for all time to come.

Mr. McCallum said that the general opinion was that the evidence taken at the Court of Enquiry did not warrant the decision that was given. If Col. Dennis had done his duty, why refuse the evidence? If not, the country should know it.

Mr. Lawson said the Court of Enquiry was composed of just and honourable men, and came to a just conclusion. Even cases before a Justice of the Peace might be conducted with closed doors, and why, then, should this Court of Enquiry be made public, when it was the general rule for such courts to be held with closed doors. He would oppose the motion.

Mr. Sproat did not believe Col. Dennis had acted as reported, or there would have been some definite charges. He believed he came out of this discussion better than before this arose. Since the Minister of Justice declared it would be injurious to the public interests to produce the papers, he (Mr. Sproat) would consider it his duty to oppose the motion, and asked his honourable friend to withdraw the motion.

Mr. Rymal considered the House entitled to know whether the officer in question was competent to discharge the duties which devolved upon him. The Minister of Militia acknowledged that there were reports of which he knew nothing. It appeared to him that a gross wrong would be done to the people of Upper Canada if these papers were refused. He knew that the people whence he hailed were strongly impressed with the belief that our Volunteer officers were incompetent. It sometimes happened that those who ran rashly into a net prepared for them, ran rashly out of it again. (Hear and laughter). Because a man runs into a hay loft with his