

1. Meetings of public bodies in the Dominion.— Since the time Canada was relieved from that system of absolutism and repression of all debate, which was a signal feature of the French regime, and became a country of English institutions, her people have raised a structure of government having at its basis freedom of speech and thought. We must place first those primary (a) meetings which are called together from time to time to discuss public questions relating to the general, the provincial, or the municipal affairs of the country. Then come the meetings of the numerous municipal councils which are guided by certain statutory laws and rules of procedure, and are at once deliberative and legislative in their character. A story higher are the various legislative bodies of the several provinces, which have plenary jurisdiction within their provincial limits, and are themselves the creators of the municipal bodies immediately below them in the structure of government. The dome of the edifice is the parliament of the Dominion, having powers of legislation over the general affairs of the whole confederation.

In addition to this artificial system which has slowly evolved from the necessities of a community having

(a) I do not use the word "primary" here or elsewhere in the narrow sense customary in the political organizations of the United States, but I refer to a "public meeting" in the ordinary or common acceptation of the phrase; that is to say, an assembly of all persons interested in the object for which it is called, and not a legislative or representative or other body of limited membership, and subject to certain constitutional and other regulations.