

might not be adopted. All authorities on the subject condemned the contract system, which operated most strongly against the reformation of the prisoner. The prisoner, under this system, found himself let out as a slave or chattel, with the contractor as his driver, whose only object was to get as much work out of him as possible. A premium would be offered for smuggling in tobacco and liquor by other workmen not prisoners. The nature of the work under this contract was such as to keep the prisoners out of sight of, and away from, the control of overseers. He went on to read some extracts from reports on the subject showing the disadvantages of the contract system of letting out prison labour. He was satisfied from the reports of these institutions in the United States that it could not be denied that the contract system was the worst system that could be made use of, and it was in his opinion a matter of great regret that the Government should have resorted to it.

Mr. LAUDER thought some authority should have been given by the Government for their having entered into this contract. The leader of the Government had only explained the provisions of the contract and excused the Government for entering into it. The management of this question of the utilization of prison labour was admitted on all hands to be an experiment, but they had not been informed of a single example on which the contract was based. Mr. Langmuir had condemned the action of the Government in this respect. He (Mr. Lauder) questioned the propriety of entering into a contract with a company for the manufacture of rolling stock for railways. They had, he believed, selected the worst kind of industry and the most objectionable. He was of opinion that a commissioner ought to have been appointed to visit the various prisons in the United States, and have furnished a report pointing out the most advisable industry to adopt. He maintained that if it were found that the contract worked badly, and interfered with the objects of the prison, the Government would be held responsible, and he asserted that the Government could not have done worse than have entered into a contract with a company, and thereby have given the control of prison labour over to that Company. He thought that if it were intended to ask the House to sanction the contract, that the subject should have been submitted to the House before. He could not see the necessity of asking the House to sanction a contract which had already been entered into. It was absurd to ask them to approve of the contract, as they had not had sufficient experience to do so.

Mr. BETHUNE said it was perfectly within the powers given to the Government to enter into the contract. The Prison Inspector had initiated and sanctioned the contract, and which was not open to any of the objections raised by the hon. gentleman. The only thing the Government were to blame for was the manner in which they had brought the matter before the House. It was absolutely necessary that they should trust the Executive in certain matters, and allow them to have control of such matters. This was not a question of the expenditure of public monies, but merely a matter of prison discipline. Gentlemen opposite had charged the Government with having acted wrongly, and in the same breath admitted that they had not sufficient information to give a precise character of the wrong-doing. He thought such statements should be backed up with substantial arguments. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. WOOD, after giving an outline of the circumstance which gave rise to the establishment of the Central Prison, and the adoption of the system adopted for the utilization of prison labour, explained the working of similar prisons in the United States. He did not think the letting out of prison labour could be construed into a party question. He detailed the system proposed to be carried out in the Central Prison, and alluded to the fact of judges being undesirous of sending prisoners to County gaols, they being only incentives to idleness, while, on the other hand, reformatories like the one being constructed had been found to be productive of very beneficial results. If the contract system could be worked out as it had been proposed, the Government would have the control of the moral training while the Company would have the control of the labour of prisoners. It would be no loss to the country, and he was, therefore, prepared to approve of the system. He thought the Government was justified in entering into the contract, they having come to the conclusion, after careful inquiry, this is the best mode of dealing with this important question. He also thought the Government had been fortunate

in obtaining a contractor who could give the facility of pursuing nearly all the trades that were pursued in the Province.

Mr. CAMERON said a gentleman opposite while in Opposition had objected to the entering into contracts except after tenders had been issued. In this instance, however, this mode of procedure had not been adopted. It was, in his opinion, objectionable to enter into such a contract without public competition. The Government had assumed the responsibility of the matter, and would necessarily have to take the responsibility if anything went wrong. He could not see the necessity of applying to the House after the contract had been made. There were some things in the contract that he considered most dangerous and impolitic. He thought it would be most impolitic to undertake that 215 labourers should be supplied to the Company, and if this number of men were not supplied, they would pay the difference between half a dollar a day and that which the Company would have to pay for the extra labour. In another portion of the contract it was said that if at any time the number of prisoners should reach 260, the authorities would provide that number of men, and that number should afterwards be the governing number. This he thought was a most improvident and imprudent arrangement to enter into. He complained of the Government having disposed of the land connected with the prison, that land having been granted for the purpose of the Central Prison.

Attorney-General MOWAT explained that the agreement with the Company provided for the isolation of that land. It was essential that buildings should not be placed upon it, it being feared that the erection of buildings would seriously interfere with discipline amongst prisoners. His honourable friend had complained of the Government having undertaken to supply 215 convicts to the Company. If his hon. friend had studied the materials before him, he would have seen that the number of convicts at the command of the authorities was several times larger than that stipulated in the contract. Again, the hon. gentleman suggested that they might have obtained better terms, but in reply to this, he (Mr. Mowat) maintained that that contention was incorrect. They could not have obtained better terms if they had advertised for tenders. At the penitentiary at Kingston, for instance, that method of utilising the labour of the prisoners in the charge of that institution was adopted, and some prisons in the United States had received tenders but they had not made better terms than in this instance. They could not under any circumstances have made better terms, for they would now be able to take advantage of many more trades than they otherwise could. He maintained that they had acted upon the suggestion of the Inspector in adopting the contract system, and quoted from the Inspector's report to show that the previous Government had advocated the system, and that it was advocated by the Inspector himself. He went on to show that a great outlay would have been necessitated had they adopted the system in operation at Kingston, and he maintained that it would have been exceedingly dangerous for the Government to have undertaken such a scheme.

After a few remarks from Mr. Lauder, the motion was carried on a division.

It being six o'clock the House rose.

After recess,

PRIVATE BILLS.

The following Bills were read a third time and passed:—

Mr. COYNE—To incorporate the town of Brampton.

Mr. CAMERON—To incorporate the Orphan's Home and Female Aid Society of Toronto.

Mr. CAMERON—To authorize an addition to the capital stock of the Consumers' Gas Company of Toronto.

Mr. WILLIAMS—(Durham)—To amend the Acts relating to the Midland Railway of Canada, to extend the time for the completion of its extensions, and to authorize the issue of second mortgage bonds.

On motion of Mr. BETHUNE—Bill to amend the Act passed in the 22nd year of her present Majesty's reign, cap. 133, and entitled, "An Act to incorporate the Canada Landed Credit Company," and to extend the powers conferred upon the said Company, was passed through Committee.

On motion of Mr. WOOD—(Brant)—Bill to incorporate the London and Petrolia Oil Pipe Company was, after some amendments, passed through Committee.