

**5 August 1881**  
**House of Commons**

**Supply – Army Estimates, Considered in Committee,**

264 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) (1881) 1031-34

MR. BYRNE [MP Co. Wexford] wished to say a few words in regard to the manner in which the Royal Hibernian Academy was conducted. He thought that some of the officers of the School were overpaid, while the pay of others was not fairly or properly adjusted. In the first place, he found that the Commandant had altogether failed to give satisfaction either to the people of Ireland or to Her Majesty's Government. Questions had been asked in the House of Commons in reference to that gentleman; and he thought he was correct in saying that the answers given by the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for War were not only not satisfactory to the House, but that they were not satisfactory to the right hon. Gentleman himself. He believed the reason was that the right hon. Gentleman had not as much or as complete control over the Institution as he would like. The conduct of the Commandant in connection with the discipline of the School had several times been called in question; not that the officer in question was not a good commandant or a good governor, but because his treatment of the children was alleged to have been very brutal indeed. In some instances he had had the children stripped from head to foot, and flogged with some instrument he had brought from abroad. In one case, this species—this inhuman instrument—of torture was stolen by the Commandant's daughter, in order to prevent it from being used. The Commandant, however, charged the boys with stealing it, and beat them with such barbarity that the daughter, in order to save the boys, had to confess that she had taken it away. He believed that the Commandant had failed to give satisfaction to anyone in Ireland, and his conduct ought not to be passed over by Parliament. He received half-pay and 9s. 6d. a-day, and for such an amount of remuneration they ought to be able to secure the services of a humane officer who had not lost all his humanity, and who would render proper services. The Commandant also received half-pay as an Adjutant; and he (Mr. Byrne) was of opinion that the multiplication of offices in this way in the same individual was unsatisfactory. Then, again, he found, in reference to the chaplains, that while the Protestant chaplain received £200 a-year, the Roman Catholic chaplain only got £150, and the Presbyterian £60. He thought that such a disproportion was highly improper. He would venture to say that the number of Protestant children was not larger than that of the Roman Catholic children; and, at any rate, so long as they employed chaplains of different denominations, they ought to provide that their remuneration was the same. All the chaplains who administered to the spiritual wants of the children ought to be equally paid, and a sum of £60 a-year to the Presbyterian chaplain was certainly not sufficient to pay him for his time and trouble. If there was a sufficient number of children to require the attendance of a Protestant chaplain, the Government should provide that the chaplain was remunerated at the same rate as the Protestant chaplain—£200 a-year. Having regard to the want of humanity displayed by the Commandant, and the unsatisfactory manner in which that officer performed his duties, he would move the reduction of the Vote by the sum of £216 18s. 8d.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That a sum, not exceeding £163,883 1s. 4d., be granted to Her Majesty, to complete the sum necessary" to defray the Charge which will come in course of payment during the year ending on the 31st day of March 1882, for Military Education."—(Mr. Byrne.)"

MR. CHILDERS [Secretary of State for War] said, he agreed with the hon. Member in some of the remarks he had made as to the different rate of remuneration awarded to the chaplains of different denominations; and he had already stated, in reply to an hon. and gallant Member opposite, that, in regard to responsibility for these appointments, he thought a better arrangement might be made than that which now existed. But, at the same

time, it was not possible to dispose of such a matter as the government of Kilmainham School at a moment's notice; and he could not undertake to say, on the spur of the moment, that he should be prepared to make an entire revision of the arrangements under which the Institution referred to was conducted. Passing from the general principle to the particular case the hon. Gentleman referred to, he believed that the state of the discipline of the Royal Hibernian School was not considered satisfactory by the military authorities last year; and Sir Thomas Steele, who was Vice-Chairman of the Governors, had in November appointed a Committee of Governors, presided over by that most admirable public servant, Sir Patrick Keenan, to examine into the state of the School, with reference particularly to the discipline administered by the Commandant. He had received their Report in the course of the spring, and, after careful consideration, he had come to the conclusion that it was not satisfactory—in fact, that it disclosed circumstances which were most unsatisfactory. It was accordingly sent back to the whole body of Governors for their consideration with reference to the facts disclosed in it. The Governors took great pains in going thoroughly into the whole question contained in the Report, and the end of the matter was that they—including the members of the Committee who made the first inquiry—unanimously reported that, although, in some respects, the Commandant had not been successful in carrying out the discipline of the School, yet, on the whole, he had made great improvement in the state of things which existed before he became Commandant. The Governors, therefore, recommended that he should be retained as Commandant until they had further experience of his efficiency. That was the unanimous recommendation of the whole body of Governors, including the three gentlemen who made the original inquiry. Upon that recommendation he (Mr. Childers) had felt it his duty to act, and the Commandant had been provisionally continued in his office. He (Mr. Childers) had taken very great pains in the matter, having read the whole of the Report and Evidence, and he had not come to this conclusion without being supported by those who generally advised him in such matters. He therefore hoped, under the circumstances, that the hon. Member for Wexford (Mr. Byrne) would not press his Motion for the rejection of this item. If, after further experience, the conduct of the Governor was still found to be unsatisfactory, he would be removed. In regard to the emoluments of this officer, he thought the hon. Member was mistaken. As a rule, the gentlemen selected for these appointments were not old officers who had been retired; but they were paid in the same way as officers in the Army holding Staff appointments. As to the chaplains, the hon. Member stated that the Protestant chaplain received £200, and the Roman Catholic chaplain £150 a-year. The salary of the Protestant chaplain was originally £231, and it was now, in the present year, £200. The Government considered that that was a very fair salary, having regard to the duties performed. He believed, but he was not quite sure, that the Presbyterian chaplain was a gentleman who was engaged in the performance of other duties, and that the number of boys under his charge was very few.

MR. BYRNE said, he was much obliged for the courteous and full explanation of the right hon. Gentleman. He understood the right hon. Gentleman to say that in future he would make himself responsible for watching the conduct of the Commandant, and seeing that he did not commit any of the barbarous acts he had been charged with persistently committing. After the explanation of the right hon. Gentleman, he would withdraw the Amendment.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. OTWAY [MP Kent, former army officer] thought the hon. Member for Wexford (Mr. Byrne) could take no other course than that which he had taken, after the statement of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for War. But, at the same time, he wished that his right hon. Friend had been able to say a little more. He thought the right hon. Gentleman should insist on the entire abolition of punishments of this kind. It was a mistake to suppose that the boys of a British soldier could not be managed as other boys were. Nor was this sort of punishment given in all cases to English boys. They had, side by side, two Schools, in which the system pursued was entirely different. In one of them—and the boys educated in it were not inferior to those of any other school—no boy was allowed to be struck by anybody. The instruction given to a Sandhurst boy was that if

he was ever struck he was to strike again, and no sergeant dare lay a hand upon him. It was absurd to tell the House that an English boy could not be managed without the use of the stick. He, therefore, hoped that his right hon. Friend would go a little beyond the statement he had made, and would see that in future the education in the Military Schools was conducted without corporal punishment, so that a stop might be put to this barbarous system of flogging.

MR. CHILDERS said, that the general use of corporal punishment in the School was the special subject of complaint.

MR. BYRNE said, he had never in the past, and would never in the future, make a statement which he did not believe to be entirely capable of proof. If the right hon. Gentleman would direct an inquiry to be made, he would undertake on behalf of his hon. Friend the Member for Wicklow (Mr. M'Coan) to bring evidence forward in substantiation of all the charges which had been made, and to show the brutal conduct of this gentleman.

MR. CHILDERS stated that the case had already been thoroughly investigated, and the result was the censure upon the Commandant, which he had already explained.

MR. ARTHUR O'CONNOR [MP Queen's Co.] remarked, that there was something which sank deeper into the mind of a boy than a blow, and that was words of opprobrium and insult. There was no doubt that in this case the Commandant had flagrantly offended, and the accusations against him had been repeated in every quarter of Ireland, until an amount of feeling had been excited against him which it was impossible to over-estimate.

MR. CHILDERS said, that if any further serious complaint of the kind was made, and it could be proved, he could only say that the Commandant would not be allowed to retain his position.

Original Question put, and agreed to.

(3.) Motion made, and Question proposed, "That a sum, not exceeding £40,100, be granted to Her Majesty, to defray the Charge for Miscellaneous Effective Services, which will come in course of payment during the year ending on the 31st day of March 1882."