

extent to which an official under this Government or under any Government may interfere in election matters? The hon. member for Kingston (Mr. Britton) complained—after all when the complaint is sifted I think there is but little in it—that the officers and men in the Battery at Kingston marched to the polls in a body against him. Now, had it been an election contest for the local legislature, I would say there was something in the complaint of the hon. gentleman, because, with a friendly returning officer and numbered ballots such as they have in the province of Ontario, every facility would have been given to the party in power to see exactly how these men voted. But under the rights of the ballot which is in vogue for members in the House of Commons, every secrecy is provided, and though the men may have gone in a body to the polls, each one had the privilege to vote as he pleased. Now, before this discussion closes I trust the First Minister will announce to the House what the intention of the Government is in regard to these officials. The hon. gentleman is credited, and I believe credited rightly so far as my intercourse with him in the past extends, with being of generous impulses and of kindly nature. Now, the hon. gentleman must know that throughout the whole country there is a large number of men holding positions under the Government, and not only are those men keenly interested in the tenure of the office they hold, but they have wives and families, and these are dependent upon the sweet will of hon. gentlemen opposite. Therefore, before the debate closes, I trust the First Minister will announce that not only will he accentuate the statement made by the Controller of Inland Revenue, but that he will go even a little further, and will announce to the office-holders of this country that before any dismissals from office are made, each case shall be fully and impartially investigated. It is not a pleasant task for any Government to dismiss officials, because it must of necessity carry in its train a large amount of hard feeling. I trust that before the debate closes the hon. the First Minister will repel the insinuation which has been made by hon. gentlemen, ministers of the exterior, if I may so term them, that the principle shall be carried out that the Liberal party having been successful at the polls, shall adopt the motto, "To the victors belong the spoils," and a wholesale decapitation shall ensue of those holding positions under the Government.

Mr. BELL (Pictou) moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Laurier). I am sorry to say to my hon. friend that I cannot accede to his demand. We must go on.

Mr. MONTAGUE. It is a subject that concerns every constituency.

Mr. BENNETT.

The PRIME MINISTER. It is an important subject, and my hon. friend from Simcoe (Mr. Bennett) has pointed out its importance. But I do not think we can adjourn at this hour.

Mr. FOSTER. Before my hon. friend makes up his mind, I would like to be allowed to say a word. One reason I have for voting for the adjournment of the debate is this: I do not think we can overrate the importance of the subject we have been debating to-day. I have listened with the greatest pleasure and interest to the discussion, so far as it has gone, and to the expressions of opinion which have gone forth from both sides of the House, and which, in the main, I think, have been very reasonable opinions. But it is undeniable that the country is looking with a great deal of interest to the action that will be taken by the incoming Government on this subject. It is being widely discussed throughout the country. Claims are being advanced of a very preposterous nature which I do not think any Government in this country would allow; others of a more moderate nature, and there is a great deal of discussion and a great deal of curiosity aroused in the country with reference to the matter. Now, it is not for the purpose of lengthening the session or preventing supply that we have thought it right to provoke a discussion upon this subject. Certainly the interest in the debate has not been confined to this side of the House. We have not yet come to any conclusion, neither have we got any authoritative statement from the leader of the Government and the important members of the Government, in reference to this subject. We are now face to face with the Estimates for the whole of the civil service and the contingent employees of the country, and on the eve of entering into the consideration of those items it is not unreasonable that we should discuss a matter of this kind and that we should have some reasonable expression of opinion from the leader of the Government and the prominent members of the Government as to the policy they propose to pursue. For my own part I should like to say something on the subject in hand, as I am pretty certain would a large number of other members. The leader of the Opposition is not present with us to-day, but he will be at the next sitting of the House, and he will have something to say on this subject. It will not add to the length of the session, or detract from the rapidity of Supply, by having a reasonable discussion on this matter, which is a most important one. It is not raised for the mere purpose of discussion, but for reasons entirely different from that. So I would like to press upon the leader of the House whether it is not reasonable to adjourn the debate at the present time.

Mr. DOMVILLE. The hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat has spoken of dismissals. I should like to bring to his