

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. CAMERON. Yes, and the First Minister knows where he stands. He knows that he can force this Bill through Parliament, and that our solemn protest will not stop him. He knows that he can make Sir Charles Tupper a member of Parliament by Act of Parliament, and he will do it. These were not always the views taken by the hon. gentleman with respect to the dignity of Parliament. He was once strong upon the necessity, in the public interest, of protecting the Independence of Parliament. When a Bill was introduced for the purpose of indemnifying some members of the late Parliament who had unwittingly violated that Act, the hon. gentleman in the strongest language, opposed the passage of that Bill, contending that everybody was assumed to know the law, and such being the case, if a member committed a violation of it, he had to take the consequences. That was the ground taken by the hon. gentleman in 1877, when he denounced the hon. member for East York and the Government of which he was the leader, for submitting to Parliament a Bill to indemnify members who had unwittingly violated the Independence of Parliament Act. I will bring the hon. gentleman face to face with his own declarations on that occasion. I propose to read from *Hansard*, and I am glad we have an authoritative exposition of the hon. gentleman's views on this question. On the motion for the second reading of that Bill, the hon. gentleman, then leader of the Opposition, stated:

"He could quite understand that there might be occasioned when a Bill of Indemnity might pass, when some one had unwittingly committed a breach of the law, in regard to which they had two or three precedents in England. But this Bill sets aside the law of the land, and provided that a person who sat in this House wrongfully, if he had a *bona fide* belief that he had a right to sit there, should still retain his seat. 'The country would say there was no use in Parliament passing laws to preserve the independence or purity of Parliament, or to protect the people against having improper representatives in the House, persons who had forfeited their seats, if this Bill were to pass. It would be said: what is the use of passing laws of this kind, if the moment persons are found to have violated the laws they are repealed.'"

I agree with the hon. gentleman in what he said then, but his course to-day is not what he indicated was the proper course in 1877. The hon. gentleman went on to say:

"Such a measure would weaken the moral sense of the people of the country."

Will hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House cheer now?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. CAMERON. It will no doubt grieve them to weaken the moral sense of the people of the country. The hon. gentleman continued:

"Here was a Bill of Indemnity, by which not only would men be deprived of the right acquired under the law, but if it passed, no one need trouble himself about penalties hereafter, for no gentleman would be patriotic enough to bring actions against corrupt members of Parliament at his own expense. If a case was inquired into, and it was shown before a Committee of the House that a party had unwittingly broken the law, there might be reason for passing a Bill of Indemnity; but to pass a whitewashing Bill of that kind would be to make Parliament the laughing stock of the whole country."

Sir, the hon. gentleman's chickens have come home to roost. Is the hon. gentleman asking for a Bill of Indemnity only? No, he asks for a good deal more, Sir. I would object to even a Bill of Indemnity in this case, because the Minister of Railways openly and not unwittingly violated the law. An ignorant violation of the law was the ground and the only ground, for the Bill of the hon. member for East York. This Bill goes further; it makes one a member of this House who has no seat in Parliament.

Mr. HESSON. How did you vote on that question?

Mr. CAMERON. That shows the ignorance of the hon. gentleman—how little he knows on this or any other subject. If he knows anything about it, he knows that I was

Mr. CAMERON (Huron).

not in Parliament then; but I can tell him how I would have voted if I had been there. The hon. Minister of Agriculture also gave his opinion of the Bill of 1877, in the following words:—

"They should be aware how they made precedents which would last till the end of time. Hon. members ought to be clear and free from any entanglement with influences which the Government might bring to bear upon them. A great principle was at stake. They should not forget the duty which they owed to the people of this country. While it might be felt that the action of the law was harsh, and while they might wish to believe the hon. gentleman in question—and no one could desire to do so more than himself—yet he would not like to infringe upon a great principle. Any person who has, at any time since the passing of the said Act, been elected a member of the House of Commons, and who, acting under *bona fide* belief that he was or continued to be qualified and capable of sitting and voting as a member thereof, has sat or voted therein, shall be and is hereby indemnified, exonerated, freed and discharged from all pecuniary penalties or forfeitures whatsoever (if any) which may have been incurred by him by reason of having so sat or voted at any time up to the end of the present Session of Parliament. Who was to say whether an hon. member acted *bona fide*, except the hon. member? Ever since he could remember, he had heard that no member of Parliament should have transactions with the Government to the extent of a single dollar. He did not believe there was a single man ignorant of those principles, and that being the case, while he regretted that any hon. member was placed in that position, he felt justified in voting against the Bill. If they allowed the independence of Parliament to be infringed, and if they took the ground that members of this House, who ought to know what the law was, were to be excused, the result would be disastrous, and there was no knowing where the thing would end."

Now, Sir, I agree with every word of these extracts which I have just read. If the doctrine laid down there is a sound constitutional doctrine, if it is in accordance with the rules of Parliament and with the Independence of Parliament Act, then I say that every word uttered by those hon. gentlemen on that occasion is an argument against the passage of this Bill. Now, I say that a Bill of Indemnity can only be justified upon the ground I have indicated, that the violation of the law was committed unwittingly. Do hon. gentlemen on the other side pretend, will the hon. First Minister pretend, that the hon. Minister of Railways violated this law in error and unwittingly. No, Sir; the hon. Minister of Railways is too astute a man for that. He knows the law perfectly well, and he must be presumed to have known the law when he violated it by taking the office of High Commissioner. The hon. gentleman did it with his eyes open and with a full knowledge of all the facts. It is as gross a violation of the law and the rights of the people as was ever perpetrated in this country; and I say that Parliament ought not to sanction this Bill. Had this House been asked to pass a Bill of Indemnity it would have been bad enough; but we are not only asked to indemnify Sir Charles Tupper from the penalties which he has incurred, but to make him a member of Parliament by Act of Parliament; and that I will oppose. But that is not all. We are asked to say what is not true, that the hon. member has not vacated his seat; then we are asked to say that the hon. gentleman should be indemnified and that there is just cause for his being indemnified which is not correct. We are asked to go a step further; we are asked to amend and to change the Independence of Parliament Act—and in whose interest? In the public interest?—for the benefit of this great country? No, Sir; in the interest of one individual and to cover one solitary case. I say there never was, in the whole history of Parliamentary Government, any such Bill as this passed through any Parliament—a Bill changing the Independence of Parliament Act in the interests of one individual, indemnifying that individual and making him an M.P. by Act of Parliament. What will be the effect of this change? The effect will be that the Government can to-morrow appoint one half of the members of this House, if they would accept the appointments, to positions under the Crown, and give them all the emoluments, allowances and profits, but not the salary. That will be the effect of this Bill if it should pass in its present shape. In this way, the hon. gentleman proposes to violate and does violate the Independence of Parliament Act. I am not surprised at this