

which I had with Mr. Macdonald, he entered somewhat more fully into details. On receiving that letter from Mr. Macdonald, I immediately wrote to him saying that I proposed to take a very careful course with regard to Government employees; that while I could not investigate the matter myself, I desired him to tell me what the facts were on his own personal assurance as a gentleman, or something to that effect, implying that I relied on his word of honour as a gentleman, that what he alleged was true; and on his giving me that assurance, I authorized Mr. Pottinger to permit the displacement of those men. Let me say further that these two men were not in the permanent employ at all. They were persons called on to work from time to time as their services might be required.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. Year in and year out.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. No, they were not employed year in and year out.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. I mean that they were the regular men for that duty. There were no other men.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I quite concede that for three or four years, perhaps longer, they were called on when required.

Mr. CRAIG. I beg to assure the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals that I have no intention of misrepresenting him at all, and I think he said just now that in this case he did discharge the men on the representation of this defeated candidate.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. On the personal assurance of Mr. Macdonald.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. Well, Mr. Macdonald is just as reliable a gentleman as any in this House.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. No person proposes to attack his character, but any man's opinion may be wrong.

Mr. CRAIG. Then it comes down to this, after all, that without any further investigation, and relying on the assurance of a defeated candidate or of a Liberal member of this House, men will be dismissed if these gentlemen wish it.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. Not at all.

The PRIME MINISTER. Nothing of the kind. There must be substantial evidence.

Mr. CRAIG. I cannot understand how there can be substantial evidence when it is done at the mere wish of a Liberal candidate or member.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. It is not at the mere wish of the candidate. There must be a specific charge made.

Mr. BLAIR.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I am willing to say this, which is entirely in accord with the view upon which I have stated I should act, that if, upon being satisfied by the best evidence that is open to me, that the charge is sustained and a removal follows, and the person who is removed upon making representations satisfies me that he was not open to the charge I should not hesitate to redress the wrong and restore him to his position.

Mr. MONTAGUE. Why not do that before dismissing him?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I regard it as practically impossible, that, with the vast staff of men who are in the employ of the department, I could institute a personal investigation into each case. I could not do it nor could the hon. gentleman do it, and it has never been done.

Mr. CRAIG. No doubt the hon. Minister of Railways thinks he is acting on proper principles, but I am afraid that the country will not think so. After all I do not think it is a commendable course to take the evidence of a defeated candidate. The ex-Minister of Finance (Mr. Foster) drew a distinction between a Liberal member of this House and a Liberal defeated candidate, which ought to have some weight with the hon. gentleman. A defeated candidate naturally smarts under his defeat, and no doubt will magnify the partisanship of those who have been against him; and I am satisfied that a great many of these men, before they have cooled down sufficiently, will think that those who had merely voted against them, acted as partisans and would be very glad to be revenged by getting them dismissed. I think it is an unfortunate position for a Minister to take, that, on the assurance of a defeated candidate that a labourer has been a political partisan, he feels called upon to dismiss him. I am glad the hon. Minister has somewhat modified that by saying that if a party who has been dismissed proves his innocence, he will reinstate him. But it certainly is opposed to British fair-play to punish a man first and then find him not guilty afterwards. I think the Government should not take such a stand. I think there is something in what the hon. member for North Bruce (Mr. McNeill) has laid down this evening, that labourers do not belong to the same class as civil servants; but leaving that out of the question, if the principle laid down by the hon. member for West Lambton (Mr. Lister) that absolute neutrality, except the act of voting, is the price of continuance in office is to be followed, the Government should at least not make it retroactive. I do not see how the hon. leader of the House can lay that down as a principle of the Liberal party, when we find in Ontario that office-holders are the most active and violent partisans. If the principle laid down by the