

which enables them to ferret out wrongdoing that could not be brought to light by others. Yet these are the men who, it is very likely, under this commission, would not be selected by the commissioners. The people will be justified in coming to the conclusion that the government, in not allowing each political party to appoint its own lawyer, desired rather to prevent information being brought out than to make the facts of the case public. The Minister of Railways and Canals says: Oh, if we accept suggestions from the opposition, it will be said that we had to accept suggestions from that source. Why, if the suggestions are good, what matter it where they come from? What will the country care who makes the suggestions, so long as the work is well done? It is desirable that all suggestions should be adopted that will better enable the commission to do efficiently the work with which they are charged. If the results are to bring out facts that the public should know and that would not otherwise be brought out, then, these suggestions should be acted upon. The excuse given by the Minister of Railways and Canals was the most flimsy answer ever made to an argument in this House, and it is one that will not satisfy the country nor will it satisfy the intelligent members of this House. The government should be willing to accept all suggestions and enlarge the scope of the commission in any useful direction. They cannot bring out too much information or lay bare too many of these nefarious transactions. I need hardly give my interpretation of the law, because, I suppose, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Blair) would set little value upon it. But, I venture to say, and I have as good a right to say it as any member of the House, even any lawyer in this House, that if the commissioners were to act strictly under the language of the commission, they could not go beyond the conduct of the officials connected with the election. They would not be able to find out who gave the money to Pritchett and Macdonald, and who raised the money—they could not inquire where the conspiracy first originated, who outlined the plan and got others to carry it out, and, in carrying it out, to perpetrate these fraudulent and corrupt acts. It is believed, by the people, properly or improperly, that certain ministers of the Crown are indirectly connected with this and responsible for it. That is a matter of common conversation and common belief. Yet, acting under the scope of this commission, the commissioners could not go so far as to inquire into that matter. So long as the language thus circumscribed the powers of the commission the government will be held responsible for not enlarging the scope of the commission to the extent the leader of the opposition desires should be done.

Mr. NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN (West Assinibola). I would like to call the at-

Mr. SPROULE.

tention of the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) to the wording of this commission. If he will look at it, I think he will see that my hon. and learned friend from Westmoreland (Mr. Powell) was not supererogatory in calling attention to it. It is an extraordinary jumble of ungrammatical construction. It says:

—to inquire into and investigate any alleged fraudulent alteration, defacing, marking, spoiling, substitution or tampering in respect of election ballots, or by reason of any fraudulent conduct in respect of the poll books, ballot boxes, or the lawful contents, or what should have been the lawful contents, of the ballot boxes, whether by way of fraudulent alteration, addition, withdrawal or otherwise.

I think if he will call the attention of the gentleman who is responsible for the drafting of the commission to the jumble, that gentleman will see that the language requires to be recast. For instance, the form of expression is departed from in the first clause:

To inquire into and investigate any alleged fraudulent alteration, defacing, marking, spoiling—

There you are using the present participle. Then we come to—

—substitution—

And then we revert to the present participle—

—defacing, marking, spoiling or tampering in respect of election ballots—

—and so on. Now, let us analyse that clause. It runs thus—the judges are to inquire into and investigate any alleged fraudulent alterations in respect of election ballots, defacing in respect of election ballots, marking in respect of election ballots, spoiling in respect of election ballots, substitution in respect of election ballots or tampering in respect of election ballots. Then you come to:

—or by reason of any fraudulent conduct.

And so on. What do you connect 'or by reason of' with? 'By reason of,' if excised, will make the sentence better.

The PRIME MINISTER. It may make it better, possibly.

Mr. DAVIN. One word as to the scope of the commission. Surely the right hon. gentleman is not going to confine this inquiry, which the public and parliament thought would relate to fraudulent practices in elections, and to every kind of corruption that can mar the efficacy of our electoral system. Is it to be confined? You make your commission, and you are going to confine it merely to irregularities connected with the marking, or spoiling or substitution of ballots. It seems to me that is not what the public expects, and it is not what parliament expected; and surely it is not what is called for in the interest of the purifying of our electoral system. Nothing can be clearer than that our electoral system has been got hold of by conspirators against the freedom of the electorate. The public mind is deeply impressed with it, and it is not enough that