

ment must take its full share of responsibility for the electoral frauds committed in that country. There was the visit of the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) to that country which could not have failed to encourage his officials. I do not believe for a moment that the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) or other members of the government knew anything of the details of the conspiracy which was being hatched up there to carry these elections, but their actions made such a conspiracy possible and I hold that they are responsible for the results. Three of the officials in the Prince Albert district pleaded guilty to not opening polls in that district and were fined \$200 each. But it is common report that if they did not open polls, at any rate they produced ballot boxes full of ballots. Is not that also a crime—the stuffing of ballot boxes? Yet we do not find the government taking any action to bring these men to justice. If they wish to clear themselves in the eyes of the people, they should send these men to penal servitude for a long period of time; but whatever they do, they can never get over the fact that the Saskatchewan election was gained by unfair methods and that the people of the province cannot be held bound by the results of that election.

Hon. FRANK OLIVER (Minister of the Interior). I do not wish to delay the House, but in view of the very definite charges made by the hon. gentleman who has just spoken, it would hardly be seemly for me, as the minister responsible for the Interior Department, to allow these charges to pass unchallenged; and while dealing with them, I may refer incidentally to some of the other matters which have been brought into this discussion without, it seems to me, the slightest necessity or excuse. I am certainly at a loss to know in what degree the question of imperial preference is concerned in the reply to the speech from the Throne and am equally unable to understand why the results in the Saskatchewan provincial election should require to be dealt with on the same occasion.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. They were introduced by the mover of the address.

Mr. OLIVER. But as my hon. friend from Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lake) has seen fit to say that the officials of the Interior Department made use of their position to intimidate electors in the recent provincial elections in Alberta and Saskatchewan, I have this to say in reply. I must admit that I was guilty of the crime of being present in Alberta and Saskatchewan during those elections and I did hear the allegations made there which the hon. gentleman has repeated here. My reply to that allegation, wherever I heard it, was this, that if it could be shown to me that any official of the department over which I have control had used his position to intimidate any elector or hold out improper inducements to any elector, I would see that he was instantly dismissed.

I asked for proof on platform after platform and the first atom of proof has never yet been offered or suggested. My hon. friend has said that some land agent of the government sent word to some voter that if he wanted to secure his patent he had better cease his activity. If my hon. friend will make good that allegation, I will guarantee him that the agent in question will forthwith cease to serve his country. And if the hon. gentleman does not make his charge good, I shall certainly expect him to apologize to this House for having made it. With regard to the so-called activity of the officials of the Interior Department, these hon. gentlemen have been good enough to suggest that the victory of the Scott government in the province of Saskatchewan was due in a very large measure to that activity. Well, there were two provincial elections in the west last fall—one in Alberta and one in Saskatchewan. Do these hon. gentlemen suggest that the victory of the Rutherford government in Alberta was due to the activity of the Interior Department officials in that province? If they do, they must give these officials credit for a very large amount of influence over the public mind. But if they are not to be credited with the victory in Alberta, I submit that neither are they entitled to be credited with the victory in Saskatchewan. The two provinces lie alongside each other and in each the conditions are similar. The officials of the Interior Department have just as much influence in the one as in the other, and it is not reasonable to suggest that the elections were won in one province by these officials and not in the other.

The gentlemen opposite have rather peculiar ideas of election, it seems to me. Their idea of a proper election is one in which the other party shall be eliminated and they shall have the privilege of casting all the votes. It would appear from what they say that it is an offence for a citizen of the Northwest to exercise the franchise, to express an opinion, or even to hold an opinion; and it is still more a crime on the part of an elector of the Northwest in the person of my humble self to go there and take part in an election. I do not agree with these gentlemen. And I wish to say further that I think it is a very serious question just how far a government has a right, by virtue of its authority, to trespass upon the rights of the citizen in the exercise of his franchise. I had occasion to express my views on that point, and I did express them, in the Northwest. The leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) did me the honour to partially quote my expressions. I will take the liberty of stating to the House what I said. I said that officials of the government were citizens, therefore they had the right to vote. I said that, having intelligence—supposedly having intelligence—they had the right to choose on which side they should vote. And I said that, having the power of speech they had the