

I feel this is one on which every senator will unite with the greatest possible satisfaction.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—In rising to offer a few observations on the subjects contained in the speech from the Throne, I feel it my duty, as others have done, to compliment the honourable gentlemen who have been put in the position on this occasion of moving and seconding the answer to the speech from the Throne. These gentlemen have performed their duty very well indeed, and it is a pleasure to this House to find that, in exercising the prerogative of calling members to seats in this House, though there has been a change of government, there is no danger, so far as we have yet seen, that the honour and dignity of the Senate will be lowered by the appointment of new members. The government have, with commendable promptness, filled the vacancies in this House, and filled them, as I have already stated, to the satisfaction of members of the Senate, as far as the gentlemen selected are concerned. While this is the case with regard to the Senate, I am sorry to say that I cannot express the same pleasure with the action of the government in filling the vacancies in the other House, and it is on this point, as well as on a great many others, that we have to gravely censure the members of Her Majesty's Government for going so strangely back on their professions when they were in opposition. If there was any one position which these gentlemen took more strongly than another during the long years they were in opposition, it was that the government of the day had shamefully abused their powers when they brought on by-elections piece-meal instead of bringing them on simultaneously, or at least in regular order as vacancies occurred. The Prime Minister speaking on this subject used very strong language to condemn the action of the late government, because he complained, and complained with some reason too, that they they had not brought on the by-elections simultaneously, where it was possible so to bring them on, and had not brought them on in the regular order in which the vacancies occurred, but had ordered them to suit their own political purposes. His language is so strong that I think it will bear reproduction. This is what the hon gentleman said during the session of 1896 in his opening speech :

On the very first day of the opening of this parliament you informed the House that you had issued your warrants. \* \* Sir, have these hon. gentlemen, these sticklers for the constitution, honoured the warrant of the speaker? They should have issued the writs. They did not do so. They have it in their power to block the warrant of the Speaker, to block the constitution of the country, to deprive the people of their rights because there is in the Act an unfortunate paragraph whereby the nomination of the returning officer belongs to them, the fixing of the date of the election belongs to them, and until they fix a date for the election, until they have appointed a returning officer the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery is altogether powerless to act \* \* \* We find that to-day two constituencies are disfranchised by these sticklers for the constitution. Some forty thousand of Her Majesty's subjects have not a voice on the floor of parliament. \* \* \* \* \*

Very well, they (the government) are welcome to all means, to all tactics which can be defended under the law, but I submit to them that these tactics are base, are cowardly, are criminal, which violate, systematically, wickedly and designedly the very letter of the statute and the most sacred rights of the people.

Will it be believed that the hon. gentleman who uttered this language, who described only a little more than a year ago the conduct of the late government in the manner I have quoted, pursued the very course that he had condemned in this strong language? What do we find? The county of Champlain has been open for three or four months and the election has not yet been held. The writ is now out, and the election is to take place early in the following month. The vacancy which occurred long after in the neighbouring county of Wright was filled with amazing promptitude, while Champlain is still unrepresented in the House of Commons. The premier styled such conduct as base, cowardly and criminal. We have another county, Colchester, which has been open for nearly three months, and in which the election will not take place until some time next month. Why was the election brought on in Bonaventure almost immediately after the death of the late member, while Champlain is still unrepresented? The explanation has been given that Bonaventure is a fishing community and fishermen must soon leave their homes to proceed to the fisheries, while Champlain is a lumbering county and the voters are not yet back from the woods. Now, I know something about Bonaventure, and I know that it is also largely a lumbering county. When I inquired of a member of the government why they undertook to operate the Bay Chaleur railway in the winter without the sanction of