

case is heard, or does he think that the hearing of one case is going to exhaust the whole time at the disposal of the commissioners, and that they cannot go into other cases? If he imagines that, I trust it will turn out that he is entirely in error, as I would hope the inquiry might be concluded inside the vacation season in all the ridings in which cases for an inquiry may be suggested. But, the hon. gentleman ignores this fact, that if any reason can be urged why the West Huron case should be taken up first, the commissioners would be very happy to hear the argument of the hon. gentleman, I have no doubt. They are not going to stop their ears to any reasons alleged as to why an inquiry into one riding should take place first. I am well assured that he will find that the commissioners, who cannot be charged with any partisan interest or party prejudice, will be disposed to give all weight to any reason the hon. gentleman may assign as to why the West Huron case should be taken up in priority to the others. Let him go there and present his reasons. But, I think it would distinctly militate against the character of this commission if we were to give instructions to the commissioners first to take up the West Huron case. Is the government going to express its opinion that the West Huron case is the only case, or the chief case of consequence, in which it is necessary that the inquiry should take place, that it is the most important case in which practices of this character are alleged to have occurred? Nobody can subscribe to that. Why, Sir, there is not a man in this country who does not believe, there are many men who, from information which they have received from reliable sources, know that fraudulent practices of this kind have obtained in election after election in this country. And to suppose that the government, in issuing a commission, are going to give the West Huron case prominence, as if it were the worst of all cases, is a proposition which I think is rather unreasonable and has nothing to support it. What we propose to do by this commission is to leave everything of a controversial character, everything that is not plain and free from question, to be dealt with by the commissioners themselves. The order of procedure they are most competent to determine upon. The time, the place, when and how, are all questions which, I think, the people, if they have faith in their competency, in their fitness, and in their impartiality, can afford to leave to them. The commissioners themselves must be competent to determine what locality, concerning which charges are made, should first be investigated. Therefore, the government has declined, and will continue to decline, to give any instructions to the commission as to which case they shall take up first. Let them hear what may be alleged, let them hear what arguments may be advanced as to the procedure and order in which the in-

Mr. BLAIR.

quiry should take place, and let them determine as in their judgment shall seem best; and their determination, I am sure, will be accepted by the country at large as a determination which is influenced by no improper motive, interest or consideration whatever. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the House will not think proper to subscribe to my hon. friend's proposition, that the commission is not sufficiently wide and not sufficiently comprehensive to enable the commissioners to make a thorough and searching investigation. I think the House is satisfied that the intentions of the government, as declared to this House, have been fully carried out. There is a bona fide and sincere desire upon the part of the government that this inquiry shall not fall from any want of scope in the commission, and, under such circumstances, I am sure the House will not accept the proposition of my hon. friend.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER (Pictou). Few hon. gentlemen on this side of the House will dispute that superior knowledge which the Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Blair) seems to claim as to the prevalence of frauds in other elections and other electoral districts. The hon. gentleman apparently has knowledge which would have been useful to parliament in connection with inquiries of this kind. He says that the West Huron election was not the first in which fraudulent practices have occurred. I want to remind him and to remind his colleagues, that it was the first election in which a demand for investigation into fraud was made by a member of this House, at any rate, for many long years past; it was the first investigation that was begun under the auspices of this House by one of its regular committees, and it is the first that, having been begun, was stopped midway by the action of the government. It is unique, therefore, in that respect. The cases of West Huron and Brockville, which I should have coupled together, are not only unique in that respect, but, as I said on another occasion, these cases, and the acts brought to light by the work of the committee last session, undoubtedly brought the government to its present position, and undoubtedly forced the government to change their front as to whether an inquiry should go on, and compelled them finally to decide to issue a Royal Commission. Under these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, if this commission is to be considered a parliamentary delegation, and not a delegation of a party, or simply of one side of the House, I think the suggestions that are made, without heat, that were made by men of the legal profession on this side of the House, should have been received in a different spirit by the gentlemen who happen to be for the moment in possession of the Treasury benches. I was glad to-night, in listening to the Minister of Railways and Canals, to find