

something; and, judging by the eagerness that has been displayed by gentlemen on the other side of the House—I will not say to invent a scandal, but to find a scandal, I do not think, if there had been a scandal there to be unearthed they would have neglected such a splendid opportunity. I do not think my hon. friend from Hamilton would have neglected to show how guilty these Grits could be, and what dishonest acts they could perform. But, Sir, there is more than this, much more—the government of Manitoba prosecuted these men. It indicted Mr. Leach; it went into the business very eagerly. But time went on, and on, and on; and as time went on, the courage of those who had been so eager to expose villainy seems to have gone down and down and down until at last it oozed out at the soles of their boots. The accuser had to press for a trial. It was not the accuser who pressed the indictment to a close; it was the accused who at last peremptorily asked that they should be tried; and when the time came for the trial, what took place? This is what took place: the prosecutor, the Attorney General of Manitoba, declined further to prosecute. Now, what reason could there be why the Attorney General of Manitoba should decline to prosecute such a damnable action as the disfranchising of hundreds and thousands of men? I will give the reason, as stated by my hon. friend from Marquette (Mr. W. J. Roche); and certainly, in my humble judgment, no one is more competent to give the reason, because my hon. friend has taken a deep interest in this matter. This is how he spoke, and his language will be found at page 8313 of 'Hansard':

Now, I am asked by the hon. member for Pictou, 'Why were these cases dropped?' What have we read in the Liberal press ever since this question arose in 1904? Persecution! Persecution on the part of the provincial government of Manitoba against these poor officials who had done nothing wrong. So it has been stated, but I do not think they will state it again. We were told that these officials were being persecuted. They were taken from court to court until they were brought to the Court of Appeal. And there it was decided that they were wrong, that they had no right to make these new polling subdivisions, and no right to treat the lists as they did. What was the use of going on when there was a decision of that kind, in the face of which such actions cannot be repeated? Had we gone on, the charge of 'persecution' would have been hurled still more viciously against the Conservatives. But another reason why these cases were dropped was that the Dominion government had turned this into a political question by sending Mr. E. L. Howard to represent the party in these cases. Would it be possible to get a jury that would not be a political jury with the Dominion government defending the accused? I think this is a sufficient answer to the hon. member for Pictou. Had the cases gone on we should have heard much more from the Lib-

eral representatives and the Liberal press the accusation that we were persecuting these returning officers.

This is all the excuse that was given for not going on with this prosecution. Let me call once more to the attention of the House this salient reason which was given by my hon. friend from Marquette for not prosecuting:

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So, Sir, if these men were not prosecuted, it was simply because of the magnanimity of the Conservative party. These men were told not to sin again. What?—the men who had been guilty of disfranchising thousands of electors? But, Sir, that is not the charge against these men now. It is not pretended by my hon. friend from Marquette that these returning officers acted dishonestly; but still, though they were simply innocent victims, they were brought to the bar of a criminal court, and had to defend themselves. But what about Leach? Is it also through magnanimity that Leach has not been prosecuted? My hon. friend said there was no use of having a prosecution, you could not get a verdict before a jury. It would have been difficult, I admit, to have got a verdict before a jury if the charge had been reduced to the statement that the returning officers had acted not dishonestly but simply in an improper conception of the law. But are we to be told that there is a jury in the province of Manitoba who would acquit any man who was guilty of stealing the franchise from his fellow men? I do not believe that. I am sure that the plea that it would have been useless to go before a jury because the Dominion government had retained the services of Mr. Howard to defend the accused, does not apply to Mr. Leach. Did the Dominion government secure the services of anybody to defend Mr. Leach? Did the Dominion government secure the services of Mr. Howard to defend its own officers—the returning officers who, according to the expression of my hon. friend, had acted unwisely but not criminally? But if no charge was made against Mr. Leach, I conclude it was because none could be made. If Mr. Leach had been guilty of having disfranchised thousands of electors, it would have been the duty of every citizen of Manitoba to bring a charge against him in order to punish him for such practices and prevent them in the future. It would have been the duty of the government of Manitoba and of the Conservative party, and, I may add, it would have been still more their pleasure. If therefore