

the statements in the resolution—that the House is of opinion that the powers, jurisdiction and so on, conferred upon the commissioners are not sufficiently wide and comprehensive to enable the commissioners to make a thorough, complete and searching investigation and inquiry into the frauds which are alleged to have taken place in connection with the elections of members to the House of Commons. I am quite willing to give my hon. friend and those who are acting with him the credit of desiring that this investigation shall be thorough and complete in every particular; and while I do that, I claim on behalf of the government and its supporters in the House an equal anxiety, and as keen a desire for a thorough and complete investigation. I take it that it is in the interest of both parties in this country that we should take means to ascertain, if possible, the extent to which these practices have occurred, and to ascertain, if possible, what means may be efficiently taken in order to prevent their repetition in the future. I think there can be nobody bold enough to affirm that these practices had their origin in any recent election: that, if they existed in relation to the election in West Huron, that was by any means the first time, nor was that the first year in which recourse was had to these means which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Borden, Halifax) wishes to see put down. And I say that this government not only has no desire to frustrate a thorough investigation, but it has no interest in preventing a thorough exposure of all parties in all elections in which it may be shown that acts of this kind have been committed. There can be no reason assigned by hon. gentlemen opposite why this government should be moved by any such disposition. I do not charge it against hon. gentlemen opposite that they would be unwilling to have the elections which took place when they were in power and when the officers were appointed by them included in the inquiry: I do not charge against them that they have any reason for so desiring. But, while I state that, I affirm, as strongly as my own knowledge and belief will enable me to do, that there is no reason under the sun why this government should not earnestly and ardently desire that the investigation should disclose anything and everything that may tend to show where these practices have existed with a view to preventing them in the future.

Now, my hon. friend (Mr. Borden, Halifax), I take it, has failed in convincing the members of this House that the inquiry cannot be thorough, complete and searching under the commission which is issued. The government has made every effort to so frame the commission, to use such terms, as will enable the commissioners to explore all the ground and to get to the bottom of these matters; and I think we have not

failed in employing language which is adequate for that purpose. I think my hon. friend has some doubts himself, at all events he had not a very strong opinion, that the first portion of the resolution was well sustained—that the scope of the inquiry would be widened by his proposal, and that, in the absence of this amendment, the commission would fail of its object. He looked at, and I think he read, the terms of the commission in this regard; and he concluded his argument in this way—that, while he seemed to think the language was strong enough and clear enough, yet there might be a doubt, and to remove doubts, it would be well that this amendment should be made. Now, Sir, that is a matter of opinion. The opinion on this side of the House, supported and sustained by the law officers of the Crown, is that the language of the commission is amply broad enough to inquire not only into the conduct of the returning officers, deputy returning officers and other officers, if there are any, but into the conduct of all persons in relation to the alleged frauds in the elections. Therefore, there is no reason why we should amend our own commission, when we firmly believe and are convinced (and my hon. friend who moves this resolution has only some doubt on the subject), that it does not require amendment, that it is sufficient for the purpose.

Mr. CLANCY. Suppose they are wrong?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. But we are assured they are not wrong; and I think we are entitled to entertain that opinion, and, entertaining it, to act upon it.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). If the hon. gentleman (Mr. Blair) will permit me, I endeavoured to state, so far as was consistent with becoming modesty on my part, that I thought the scope of the commission was not sufficiently wide for the purpose. Of course, I had every respect for the opinion of gentlemen who differed from me. Therefore, I did not see fit to make a positive statement, as I knew there were gentlemen, such as my hon. friend the Minister of Railways and Canals, who seemed inclined to hold a contrary opinion.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I did not attribute my hon. friend's hesitancy to modesty; but, since he affirms that was the reason of it, I am bound to accept his statement. But I think I shall be justified in expressing some surprise that his modesty carried him as far as it did; and I do not acknowledge that the language of this clause was open to the doubt which he expressed in this resolution. Now, let me call attention to the actual language of the commission, and, in the first place, to the preamble. The preamble

Mr. BLAIR.