

motto for United States emblem was "We can lick all creation." I can only say that the hon. Postmaster General has made all Canadians, unless they have a brush and water handy, lick the back of all creation in order to get a stamp stuck on a letter.

I have just a word or two to say with reference to a statement in the press that the Government are about to provide a telegraph service to the Yukon country. I am glad to see the Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Blair) in his place, because I happened, when in London, to see one or two letters written over the hon. gentleman's signature bearing on this subject, which letters appears to me to conflict with the statement that we were about to undertake the construction of a telegraph line. I found in the "Financial Times" of December 14th, 1898, a letter signed "A. G. Blair," which I will not read in extenso, though it is very interesting, but only that which is immediately pertinent to the question. The "Financial Times" says: "This was made clear by the following letter, addressed last October by Mr. Blair, the Canadian Minister of Railways and Telegraphs, to the gentleman who was arranging the Northern Commercial Telegraph Company." The letter is dated 6th October, 1898, and says, in part:

I told this gentleman very frankly that my department had an understanding with you, and that we were giving you the preference, at least until we were satisfied that you were delaying in pushing the work unduly, and I said that upon that point we would be in no position to form an opinion till next spring.

Then there is another letter also dated 6th October, 1898:

I am very much pleased indeed to learn that it is your intention, representing the Northern Commercial Telegraph Company (Limited), to proceed without unnecessary delay with the construction of the telegraph line from the coast into Dawson City, to be followed thereafter with reasonable despatch by the laying of a cable or cables from Vancouver to the point of connection with the land line.

I draw attention to these letters because I cannot understand, how, as there are two companys, both, I believe, floated in London for the express purpose of carrying out this work, and the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals had declared that he was ready to give the preference to one company, the Government could undertake the construction without other authority.

I now come to a subject that I should fail in my duty to this House and to the country if I did not draw attention to, and that is something that does not appear in the Speech. I can hardly say that it does not appear in the Speech, because there is a clause that has such a close relation to it that I suppose it may be held to be inclusive. But I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the only proposition that is made to this House is for a re-arrangement of the electoral districts. Now,

Sir CHARLES TUPPER.

I want to ask my right hon. friend where he gets the authority for a re-arrangement of the electoral districts. Canada has existed for some thirty-two years, and I believe I am correct in saying that in that period it has been regarded as a part of the constitution of Canada that a general arrangement of the electoral districts can only take place at a stated period, and that is after a decennial census. Now, I would like to know from my right hon. friend where he finds authority for this fresh innovation of the constitution of Canada—for I regard it as nothing else. I say it is without precedent that this House, called at this late period of the year, at a period most inconvenient for hon. gentlemen to remain here at any great length of time, should be placed in a position to have to deal with such a measure as this, a measure that must keep us here for a very long period. What is the object? what is the necessity? I have stated that the constitution provides for a re-arrangement of the electoral districts only after a decennial census; and since Canada was confederated there has never been anything but a temporary re-adjustment of some particular locality owing to some circumstances which had occurred, as an exception to that rule. Therefore, I challenge the right of the hon. gentleman to adopt such a course. What is the meaning of it? We went to the country in 1896, and the right hon. gentleman, by means to which I have already alluded, secured a majority. Is he afraid to go back to that constituency? He boasts of carrying the by-elections. It is too late to-night to go into the question of by-elections, for I think I could enlighten the House a little as to the way by-elections are carried. I see my hon. friend the Minister of Public Works with his hands over his face, enjoying the idea of the mode in which by-elections are carried. He has much experience in that manner. Sir, I am afraid that these things indicate that the right hon. gentleman, having obtained improperly a majority in this House, having obtained by means that cannot be repeated, a majority in this House, wants to escape a verdict of that electorate that he represents to-day. Last session we had this precious electoral law, which means handing over to the most unscrupulous and most dishonest manipulation the electoral lists in the various provinces, with the control of the franchise of this independent House of Commons of Canada. It meant that a fair and open contest in the presence of the electorate as it exists to-day and existed in 1896, would fail to give the hon. gentleman a similar success. But it appears that is not enough. Where are you with your electoral law? Why, Sir, the hon. gentleman says that he has kept one pledge, at all events, made to the people of this country, and that was that he would pass a new electoral law. He never kept his pledge. He promised