

can do the importance of every public man feeling that upon his personal character must depend the confidence in which he will be held by the people outside; and I deplore as much as anyone can do that by the system which the hon. gentlemen opposite are pursuing, and of which to-night we had a notable example, the public character, the characters of public men are becoming of no account whatever, and that the only test of merit is the side of the House upon which an hon. gentleman may happen to sit. There is no more dangerous condition of things than that, and when the hon. gentleman reads us, as he has read to-night, the letters of members of Parliament whose only offence is that they have done what I know hon. gentlemen on that side are doing with the most perfect propriety, writing to the Department of the Interior in relation to the interests of friends who may be affected by the Department, when he reads a list of names and charges that the gentlemen who wrote the letters are guilty of corruption and are to be condemned, he simply attempts to make an offence out of what every honest man, every man of common sense, knows is no offence, and he lessens to that extent the public sense of the enormity of serious charges, when serious charges may be made against gentlemen on either side. Sir, it is no trifling matter, looked at in the character of our public life, that this kind of charges should be made, and that the mere incidents of our public position, the fact that we represent constituencies and that we have to write to the Departments in relation to matters in which our constituents or our friends may be interested—that these are to be held to be offences to be punished by the censure of Parliament, and pronounced to be acts which are blunting the public conscience and rendering the public life of the country corrupt. Now, what are the charges which the hon. gentleman has made, and what has been the policy of this Government in relation to the several subjects to which he has referred? He referred in the first instance to the question of timber limits, and he declared that the policy of this Government in relation to timber limits had been a policy of corruption, a policy of giving away the public domain for the benefit of the supporters of the Government and that it had been a policy subversive of the duty of the Government to husband the resources of the country, and get from those resources the largest possible return that can be obtained for them from the people. Now, will you allow me for a moment to state what has been the policy of the two parties respectively in relation to timber limits. In the Session of 1872 the Conservative Government then in power introduced into Parliament and passed into law an Act of which the following is section 50:—

"The right of cutting timber on such timber limits shall be put up at a bonus per square mile, varying according to the situation and value of the limit and sold to the highest bidder by competition either by tender or at public auction."

That was the law passed in the year 1872, when the Conservative party began to deal with matters in the North-West after we had acquired that territory. The Liberal party came into power in the fall of 1873, and in their very first Session they repealed that section and substituted in the stead of it this:

"Provided further, that in cases where application may be made for limits on which to cut timber in unsurveyed territory, the Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior, authorise the same to be leased for such bonus as may be deemed fair and reasonable, such leases to be subject nevertheless to the foregoing conditions in this section, except as to that part of sub-section 1, which provides for the erection of mills, which provision in respect to limits in unsurveyed territories, may, if considered expedient by the Minister of the Interior, be dispensed with."

So that at the very first Session of Parliament after they came into power they repealed the Act which they found on the Statute-book, which required the timber limits of the

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell).

North-West to be given by public competition, and assumed the right to give these timber limits by mere Orders in Council; and they went so far in unsurveyed territory—which at that time included practically the whole of the Territory—that even the condition that a mill should be built might be dispensed with by the Governor in Council. During the time those hon. gentlemen were in office some 605 square miles in all were granted, and not a single rood was let by public competition. Every single acre of that land was given by Order in Council, and given to gentlemen who certainly were not political opponents of theirs, whatever their politics may have been. Now, Sir, since this Government came into power what has been the result? The result has been that one-third of all the territory for which timber licenses have been granted, was put up and disposed of at public auction, the policy being that whenever there were two applicants for the same territory, it would be put up at public competition, and the highest bidder would get the grant. Now, Sir, let me point out another fact. The hon. gentleman says—and he is right—that the duty of the Government is to husband the resources of the country, and to obtain for the people the largest amount that can be obtained. Well, Sir, during the five years his friends were in office, while they had given timber limits for 605 square miles, all the money they received for dues, ground rents, bonuses—no, there were no bonuses, because they put up nothing at public competition—was \$6,160; while, during the last five years, this Government has received from timber limits in the North-West for ground rents, bonuses, dues and royalties, no less a sum than \$539,433. And yet the hon. gentleman tells us that the policy of this party bears an unfavorable contrast, forsooth, to the policy of hon. gentlemen opposite; because, after the law had been altered, after they had taken advantage of it for five years, and after they found themselves again in the cold shades of opposition, they moved a resolution that the policy of 1872 was after all the best policy—a resolution practically of censure on themselves for having repealed the Act, and in a favor of a policy which would have continued to be the policy if they had never occupied seats on the Treasury benches. The hon. gentleman has talked of this granting of timber limits as a matter of party advantage, used by this Government for corrupt purposes, in order that their friends might be advantaged, in return for their support. Why, Sir, after they were beaten at the polls—I have referred to it before, but it is worth referring to again—when they had no longer a right to deal with the public domain, on the 7th of October, 1878, the very day before they resigned the seals of office, they passed an Order in Council granting, without competition, without the suggestion of competition, but simply as a favor, to Messrs. Cook & Sutherland, gentlemen who certainly were not Tories, whatever else they were, no less than 200 square miles, not all in one block, but in areas of twenty square miles, wherever they might select them all over the northern part of the Territories. And yet Sir, these hon. gentlemen rise in their places here and charge this Government, forsooth, with having used the public domain for political purposes, when their last act before leaving office—done, I suppose, on the principle on which governments in England are supposed to create peerages for their friends before they leave office, although they have been beaten—was the act I have described. Yes, and they gave these gentlemen, as my hon. friend suggests to me, in the Order in Council three years within which to make the selections of the twenty-mile blocks, without any undertaking to cut timber, without in fact any obligation except to make all the money they could out of the timber limits they thus obtained.

Mr. COOK. Your statement is not true, Sir.