

said J. H. C. Atkinson and W. D. Balfour, M.P.P., on the 24th day of February, on the telephone cable between Leamington and Pelee Island.

"3. That F. B. McCormick did at first positively refuse to give the requested information, on the ground that he did not wish to get any person into trouble over the matter.

"4. That after some conversation regarding the matter, F. B. McCormick made a formal statement as follows:— 'That on the 26th day of February, he, F. B. McCormick, was informed by Wm. Prosser, Fishery inspector, Leamington, that a copy of a telephone service conversation between J. H. C. Atkinson and W. D. Balfour, M.P.P., had been sent from station No. 2 of the telephone line between Leamington and Pelee Island to Mr. Smith, druggist, of Leamington, and secretary of the Conservative Association there. That he, F. B. McCormick, did see the said copy and learned that the conversation was intercepted at station No. 2 by a Miss Quick who was then visiting with the family of the operator, Wm. Grubb. That Miss Quick made an affidavit to the correctness of the said copy before him, F. B. McCormick. That he believed that the operator at station No. 2, Wm. Grubb, was aware of the transaction after the fact.'

"And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the Act respecting extra-judicial oaths.

"Made and declared before me } JOHN FINLAY, J.P.  
this 26th day of May, 1891. }

"JAS. I. SRIGLEY, Sen., J.P. for Essex."

I read this affidavit for the purpose of showing that the attention of the Government has been called to it, and I propose to put a question on the Notice paper asking what action the Government intend to take in regard to this very serious matter. That is not a private telephone company, but is under the control of the Government, and the attention of the Government has been called to this misconduct, as is proved by a letter of acknowledgment. The reason I bring this complaint in here is to have it placed on record, for the matter is going to be followed up. It is simply scandalous that a telephone office should be used in this way. It is well known in Essex by the Reformers that, during an election contest, we cannot use with any safety the telephone line to Pelee Island; and we have the fact in evidence, it may be important or not, that a conversation was intercepted, used by the local Conservative Association, and subsequently reported to the Dominion Government. In order to show that the attention of the Government has been called to this matter, I will read the following letter:—

'J. H. C. ATKINSON, Esq.,  
"Pelee Island, Ont.

"DEAR SIR,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter on the 20th ultimo. The matter will be inquired into at once, and I will advise you of the result as early as practicable.

"I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

"F. N. GISBORNE, Supt."

Nothing more has been heard of this matter. It was reported to the Government that there was evidence that such a conversation was intercepted and probably used. The parties complained to the proper officer, but, so far, they have been unable to obtain satisfaction. Now, Sir, these are serious charges, they are charges in which members on both sides of this House are interested. Most certainly the telegraph and telephone and post office service should be held sacred in this country. So far as that telephone line in Essex is concerned, we now know to our sorrow in many cases that it has not been so held. I do not know that I have anything more to say at this stage, except to call the attention of the Government to the conduct of the Collector of Customs in that riding.

Mr. BOWELL. Who signed that last letter you read: you did not tell us where it is from?

Mr. ALLAN.

Mr. ALLAN. It is signed F. N. Gisborne, Superintendent of Government Telephone Service, Department of Public Works. I state, Sir, that I believe the course of the hon. Minister is unprecedented. I do not think it would be possible for him to find such conduct as his justified by the conduct of any British statesman. I do not believe that in the United States any politician would do such a thing at any time, not even during an election contest. We find the hon. gentlemen opposite stating that they copy British precedents, but I venture to say that neither in England nor in the United States would it be possible to find a precedent for their conduct. However, we very often experience that if there is anything bad in the United States' system of Government, hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches copy it. They have copied the National Policy and the Gerrymander from the United States, and they are to-day, by their course of conduct, ushering in what I believe to be that most pernicious principle, namely, that to the victors belong the spoils. In our section of the country, and I believe it is the same all over Canada, they have encouraged paid officers of the Dominion to go out and take an active part in election campaigns. In the riding of South Essex, the collectors of Customs took the stump from the start to the finish of the contest. Mr. Gott, collector at Amherstburg, was an active worker in the campaign; he is not a speaker and he did not take the stump, but he was an active worker. Mr. McCormick, who was collector of Customs, and who was ordered to report at Windsor, took an active part, as did also Dr. King, of Kingsville, and Mr. Scott, of Leamington, two collectors of Customs. It is a matter of regret to me that civil servants of this Dominion should be allowed to act in this way. I deplore the day when the Government of this country placed upon the Statute-book the right of these men to vote, for I believe that we are drifting into a system which will lead to the adoption of the very worst feature in the American system, that is, the principle that to the victors belong the spoils. I believe that these public officers should be neutral, and that they should not take any part in an election campaign. I would not expect, of course, that every person appointed to every paltry office in this country should lose the right of citizenship; that is too much to expect, but the line should be drawn somewhere. If a person accepts an important position like that of collector of Customs—whether he be Reformer or Conservative, I don't care which—it should be the policy of both sides of this House to prevent such a man from taking an active part in elections. I refer especially to the County of Essex, because I know of my own personal knowledge what did take place there, but I believe the same system obtains everywhere else over the Dominion. Every one of these officials I have referred to were active and bitter partisans, doing all they could against the Reform candidate. Not only was this the case with the four collectors of Customs, but it was also the case with other officials in the office. One gentleman was so active, and so much in the secrets of the party as to what the Red Parlour was able to do, that he thought it safe to put up money on the result, and he lost four or five hundred dollars on the result in South Essex. That showed that he was prominent in the secrets of the party workers, because on the