

and when I say civil service, I do not refer alone to those who may be in the employ of the Dominion in the different offices in this city, but to the civil service throughout this whole Dominion—that we should draw attention to the fact that they have had intimations given to them, to at least a certain extent, as to how the Government propose to deal with them. It is a most serious thing that men who have worked in the civil service for years and made it their only means of livelihood, should be summarily dismissed because they may have taken some part in the elections which have just taken place. And I think it would be a matter of consolation to the service to know that the intimation which has been made to-day from the back benches of the hon. gentlemen opposite, that to the victors belong the spoils, does not convey the sentiments of the Ministers. The hon. Minister of Public Works has not seen fit to express his intentions or ideas as to how he proposes to move in the premises, but if the newspaper reports are correct, he has, at least by his actions, shown how he is disposed to deal with those in his department whose services he considers should be dispensed with. Not being conversant with the facts, I will not allege that the hon. Minister of Public Works has seen fit to dispense with the services of clerks in his department by reason of their political proclivities. But if the reports are correct, I think the hon. Minister of Public Works has not done what he should have done in the premises. He has sheltered himself behind the defence that these officials were dispensed with, not on investigation by himself but by reason of reports made to him by those who are their superiors, but who are subordinate and inferior to himself. I contend that that is a very unfair principle to follow and very unjust with regard to those employees who have been thus dismissed. It must of necessity follow that if one of his chiefs be actuated by animus or ill-will towards a subordinate and has vested in him this very large power, he has every opportunity of venting his spleen on the officials under him, and I think that the principle adopted by the hon. Minister of Public Works in this regard is not one that should commend itself to the sense of fair-play of any one. I would compare his action in that regard with the statement made to-day by the hon. Controller of Inland Revenue (Sir H. Joly de Lotbinière). I think I was an honourable and manly statement which was made by him, and one which will commend itself to both sides of the House and the public at large. The Controller of Inland Revenue announced to-day that his policy would be this: If any complaint were preferred against any one in his department, it would be his duty and he would make it his duty to at once inquire in a most searching manner into the matter. It is a principle which should be conceded by all to be fair and proper and which we must all admire,

Mr. BENNETT.

that no man should be first convicted and afterwards tried. The hon. gentleman has said fairly and courageously that he proposes in every instance where a charge is preferred against any subordinate or official in his department, that an investigation shall be conducted into the charge, fairly, openly and above board, and if it be shown that the accused acted in a manner not proper or consistent with his position as a public officer, then he will decide upon the merits of each individual case. I would wish that the hon. gentleman had gone further and said that no matter whether an official was of Liberal or Conservative proclivities, the same measure of justice would be accorded in each and every case. Now, the hon. Minister of Marine and Fisheries has taken a course which I am sure, on mature consideration, will not be followed out in the future. I am sure that he must see that in the cases which have been cited here to-day, fair-play has not been accorded to those men. Now, so far as I have heard the debate—and I think that the facts are not disputed in some, at all events, of the cases—complaints have been made by political antagonists of these officials, and after the preferring of these complaints, these men were, in the most arbitrary manner, decapitated. They were politically guillotined without ever being permitted the opportunity of meeting their accusers face to face. I say that this discussion will be read with the very deepest interest by a large number of people throughout the Dominion. It will be read, not only by the office holders themselves, but by their friends, irrespective of party, and more particularly in the province of Ontario. We always claim that in Canada we are guided by precedents, and I believe it is well that we should be guided by precedents, and it is an admitted fact that in the province of Ontario, both in federal and local elections, a great deal of interest is evinced by the officials in political contests. I am not going to contend, and have never contended, that political decapitation should be inflicted on those who may have politically opposed the Government. During the term of the past Parliament, I have had in the constituency which I represent the active and most unqualified opposition of men holding positions under the Federal Government. I recall one case in particular in which, had I permitted vindictiveness and a wish for reprisal to rule, I had opportunity to do great injury to another and could easily have deposed him from an office under this Government which he held. The man to whom I refer occupied the position of lighthouse-keeper. It was a notorious fact that he was much opposed to me in my elections. There was not only his own influence, but a large family influence was, in a most hostile spirit, thrown against me. That man was convicted by the fishery overseer of harbouring through the winter—and it was a notorious fact that he did it—some two or