

that the returning officers and Mr. Leach in thus adjusting the local lists to the boundaries of the federal constituencies acted in a dishonest manner and disfranchised hundreds, nay, thousands of electors. In fact, in order to characterize their indignation at this allegation of dishonest work on the part of the returning officers and Mr. Leach they have coined a new expression and described it as the thin red line. It is not altogether a new expression, but these gentlemen have given a new sense to the old expression 'the thin red line' which for the last two centuries has described the formation of the British army going into battle. So, in this later day we have two meanings for the expression: The thin red line. Before I proceed further let me say that with regard to this phase of the question my hon. friend from Marquette (Mr. Roche) was very emphatic, very pronounced and very precise. The hon. gentleman made a very able speech in this debate for which I give him full credit, but able as it was it was even more ingenious than able. In this connection, however, the hon. gentleman made a statement which I think is not to his credit as I believe it is altogether unfounded. After having stated that the lists had been confided by the returning officer to Mr. Leach, the hon. gentleman said ('Hansard' 9299):

When these lists were returned to the returning officer it was found that scores and hundreds of names were scored out by means of the thin red line, not, as I say, confined to border constituencies, but two-thirds of them were polling divisions within the limits of the local constituencies. We are told that it was a necessity to do this. Every Liberal on that side of the House has tried to leave the impression upon this House and the country that the interference took place in connection with polling subdivisions in the interior of these local subdivisions. Their whole argument was to leave the impression that only because of overlapping was there any necessity for the thin red line, and that the thin red line was operated only in those particular instances. I challenge anybody to prove that it took place only in those border constituencies. In my own constituency there was very little overlapping, just a small portion of three municipalities, one of which is in the unorganized district. And still there was 1,900 names through which the red line operated. I am not going to say that those 1,900 names were absolutely disfranchised. It was impossible for me to tell. We did not have an investigation in the constituency of Marquette, and why? I knew the returning officer was an honourable man, he was a personal friend of my own, and he himself could not stoop to anything of this character. Where he erred was in transferring, by the direction of somebody, the voters' lists for the constituency to the Liberal organizer. The latter did the work, he did the disfranchising.

Now, I call the attention of my hon. friend to these words:

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

'The latter did the work; he did the disfranchising.'

Here and now I take complete and absolute issue with the statement of my hon. friend. I deny altogether that he has any proof against Mr. Leach that Mr. Leach disfranchised anybody.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Well, Sir, here and now is the time for both sides to discuss this matter and discuss it we shall. I do not say that Mr. Leach may not have been guilty of some error. That is quite possible. But to say that Mr. Leach or the returning officers deliberately, wilfully disfranchised hundreds, nay thousands, of electors, there is no evidence of such a charge; and, Sir, the proof which I have to give of the assertion I now make is that whenever and wherever those who made this charge against Mr. Leach and against the returning officers were called upon to give their evidence, they failed absolutely in the task. There was a committee of this House appointed two years ago to inquire into these matters. On that occasion this House adopted this motion:

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the operation of the Acts relating to the election of members of this House, and into the practice and procedure in connection with election petitions, and to consider what changes are desirable therein, with power to send for persons, papers and records, to examine witnesses under oath, and to report from time to time.

The members of this committee were: Mr. Aylesworth, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Greenway, Mr. Stockton, Mr. Ingram, Mr. Macdonald, of Pictou, and Mr. Barker. This committee had power to send for persons and papers. They sent for persons to investigate what? To investigate the alleged frauds which were said to have taken place in Manitoba. They sent for whom? They sent for Mr. Knott, the counsel who had been charged with the prosecution of Mr. Leach and the returning officers. They sent for papers—what papers? The papers in connection with the electoral lists in Manitoba. In this committee there were some friends of ours who sit on the other side of the House. There was Mr. Ingram, who is no more in this House, who was a very fair man, but a strong partisan and a good fighter. I say to his credit that no fairer man, in my estimation, ever sat in this House than Mr. Ingram. There was Dr. Stockton, a most honourable man, as everybody knows, and whose loss we certainly deplore. There was my hon. friend from Hamilton—if I may give his name, Mr. Barker, a very fair man and a good fighter, and I think not a man to neglect any advantage that might come to his party. The Conservative members of that committee went into that fight to unearth