

"I at once took possession of what of the office I could get, and have since acted for your department on the Island by giving clearances and accepting duties. I have called for instructions and have not received them as fully as I should, and now apply to you to give them to me.

"Yours truly,

"J. H. C. ATKINSON."

The next communication was a letter from the collector at Amherstburg to J. H. C. Atkinson, dated on the 29th of April, as I wish the House to remember, after the election was all over and the excitement had subsided. Mr. Gott was a very active man in that contest, and I shall refer to that matter before I sit down. Now, to show that he was in this plot, here is a letter dated the 29th April, some time after the election. He allowed Mr. Atkinson to remain at his post, the man who, he states, had usurped the office and taken possession of it in an illegal way, and he now calls upon him to surrender the same:

"SIR,—I have to request you to cease acting as an officer of the Customs until you are legally authorized to do so. No person can have any right to act as an officer of the Customs until duly appointed, or until the office had been regularly handed over to him. I am responsible for the actions of all officers of Customs in my survey. I stated to you before that when I received any instructions about you, I would let you know; therefore, if you have taken possession of any Customs books, papers or other property of the office, you must at once deliver the same to F. B. McCormick, sub-collector of South Port. I know no other person on Pelee Island as an officer of Customs but him. You must understand I am personally responsible for any irregularity that may occur (if any). I therefore feel that I cannot allow the interests of the Customs Department on Pelee Island as now conducted.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

(Sd.) "GEO. GOTT,

"Collector.

"I have handed to officer McCormick a copy of this.

"GEO. GOTT, Coll."

This, Mr. Speaker, was evidently written on the collector's own account. He does not state that he was authorized in any way to request that the office should be vacated. He does it on his own account; he is collector and is responsible for the actions of all officers of Customs in his survey, a point which would have been well taken if it had been taken as soon as the collector knew about it. I have other documents which will throw light upon this matter. One is as follows:—

"CUSTOMS, CANADA,

"COLLECTOR'S OFFICE,

"AMHERSTBURG, 30th April, 1891.

"J. H. C. ATKINSON, Esq.,

"Pelee Island.

"SIR,—The following is a copy of a letter of instructions I have received from the hon. the Commissioner of Customs, received since I sent a letter to you on the 29th instant.

"CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT, CANADA,

"OTTAWA, 28th April, 1891.

"GEO. GOTT, Esq.,

"Collector of Customs, Amherstburg.

"SIR,—I am instructed by the hon. the Minister of Customs to inform you that, pending further investigation by a special officer of the department, the intended appointment of Mr. Atkinson as sub-collector of Customs on Pelee Island will remain in abeyance. You will, therefore, instruct Dr. McCormick to resume his duties as sub-collector on the Island until further instructed.

"As soon as the special officer's report is received, such action will be taken as will be deemed most in the interest of the revenue and the people of the Island. Notify Mr. Atkinson and Dr. McCormick of the contents

of this letter, and pay Mr. Atkinson for services rendered by him at the rate of \$400 per annum.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

(Sd.) "J. JOHNSON.

"Commissioner."

"I have, therefore, to request you to call at my office at your earliest convenience, so that I may take account of your services.

"I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

"COLLECTOR."

Here is a copy of Mr. Atkinson's reply to Mr. Johnson's letter:

"PELEE ISLAND, 2nd May, 1891.

"GEO. GOTT, Esq.,

"Collector, Amherstburg.

"SIR,—Your letters of the 29th and 30th April have been received and contents noted.

"Yours truly,

"J. H. C. ATKINSON."

As I have pointed out, on April 28th when the hon. Minister had no political axe to grind, we find that he is animated by laudable interest in the revenue and the people of Pelee Island. Although the hon. gentleman perhaps did not know the extent of the plot, it was certainly very indiscreet and improper for the Minister of Customs, or any man in his station, to make an appointment in that way. The hon. Minister may not have been aware of the desperate efforts that were made in the South Essex contest, of which this matter is only one instance; but I submit that it is the duty of the Minister of Customs to explain to this House and to the country, and particularly to the people of Pelee Island and of South Essex, who have been deceived in this matter, why a telegram was not sent from Ottawa, the seat of Government, but from Norwood, and a public office handed over from one party to another to secure votes, and while I obtained the majority of the votes, I did not get the vote I expected, on account of these efforts of the Conservative party to secure a victory in South Essex. I have another matter in connection with this affair which shows the length to which these men proceeded at Pelee Island. The telephone between the mainland and the Island is under the control of the Government. It was well known to the political party to which I belong that it was very dangerous for us to communicate with the island by telephone; still in some cases we were obliged to do so. In regard to this collectorship business, I find—or the person who was temporarily appointed there but not really appointed, found—there was a telephone message intercepted at one of the stations, and that message was used by the Conservative Association of the town of Leamington. Complaint of the matter has been made to the Government or to the proper officer, the inspector of the Government telephone system, but no action has been taken. I propose to read an affidavit in regard to the way this telephone system is conducted, and to show the injustice and insecurity of the manner in which it is operated, to which the attention of the Government has been called. The affidavit is as follows:—

"PELEE ISLAND, ONT., May, 1891.

"1. I, John Finlay, J.P., do solemnly declare that on the 28rd day of May, 1891, I was personally present at the interview between J. H. C. Atkinson and F. B. McCormick, at the latter's residence at Pelee Island in the County of Essex, Province of Ontario.

"2. That J. H. C. Atkinson requested Mr. McCormick to give him information with regard to the interrupting and copying of a conversation which has passed between the