

of the country to the other, but he must know that such appointments do not come under the Civil Service Act, but are made by the minister and are revocable by him at pleasure. I would refer the hon. gentleman to cases in which the power of dismissing was exercised in a most cruel degree by the late government in the department of railways. Lockmasters on our canals, and others who had been employed on these canals for years, were removed ruthlessly without reason by the late Minister of Railways, simply at the request of members supporting the government. I must say to the credit of some of those members that they were honourable enough not to exercise the power given them, but others did not fail to take advantage of their opportunities, and even should this government exercise the power of dismissal in the cases which do not come under the Civil Service Act, they would be only following the bad example set by their predecessors.

Mr. E. A. LANCASTER (Lincoln and Niagara). When the hon. member for Carleton, N. B., (Mr. Carvell) was speaking, I asked him what he would say about the high-handed acts of the government which he supported so strenuously in their dismissals of men on the Welland canal, which runs through the constituency I have the honour to represent. The hon. gentleman was gracious enough, instead of answering my question, to say that I could address my words to the House. I intend to avail myself of his kind permission. In 1896, when the government led by the present leader of the opposition (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) took office, without a word on record from anybody concerned, on which to base such an action, a letter was written by the Minister of Railways and Canals to the superintendent of the Welland canal at St. Catharines instructing him to dismiss at once all lock tenders, lockmasters and others on that canal. That is, he was to tell them they need not report for duty after that season, unless they were re-appointed. No charge was made against these men, and no reason could be given for their dismissal except that they had been appointed by a Conservative government. They were excellent men and had done their work well; no one suggested the contrary. Simply the hon. member who represented Lincoln down to 1900 came to Ottawa and saw to it that the letter was written and the dismissals took place. Let me quote what the Hon. A. G. Blair, Minister of Railways said about it. This will be found in 'Hansard' of 1897, vol. 1, page 2122:

At the close of navigation in the fall of 1896, all employees were notified through the superintendent by letter from myself as minister,

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that their services were not further required, and that they would be notified before the opening of navigation next spring if they were to be taken on again.

There were 130 of these dismissals at once. The canal could not be managed without some experienced lockmasters, so forty or fifty Conservatives were kept on for another season to teach the new appointees, and then they went too. We hear hon. gentlemen opposite to-day voicing beautiful precepts, setting up high standards of honour and laying down fine rules of discipline to be applied to the Civil Service. The right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) said that public officials should not be dismissed so long as they merely expressed their own opinions and voted. But no one pretended that those lock tenders and lockmasters had been active partisans. The only thing against them, as I said, was that they were appointed by a Conservative government. These hon. gentlemen are worried about the inhumanity of the spoils system. What a great difference it makes in these gentlemen that they are there, rather than that they are here. What wonderful ideals of morality have taken possession of their minds since they were beaten by the people on the 21st of September. Some of these men who were then dismissed are living to-day in poverty. And as fast as I can, I intend to give back to them, if I have any influence with the government, the same positions they had in 1896. And if any have died since then, so far as I can accomplish it, their sons, if they are needy, or some other men whose only fault is voting for the Conservative party, shall be appointed in these places, instead of the men who were ungracious, even inhuman enough, to have their neighbours dismissed and take their positions, to the numbers of one hundred and eighty in the Niagara district alone.

The leader of the opposition says that officials should not be dismissed if they only expressed their opinion. Did he ever hear of the case of the postmaster of Beamsville, Ontario? This postmaster voted, and did nothing else. But after the results in that village—in which resided Mr. Gibson the Liberal candidate—were known, he remarked: 'I guess Gibson's in the soup.' This was not said during the election, but after the election was over. And the man was dismissed for saying it. Gibson was not 'in the soup' to the extent that the postmaster thought, but he got there four years afterwards. And was there an investigation in this case? After the man was dismissed, they thought it necessary to hunt up a reason for dismissing him, and they succeeded in bringing forward the evidence I have indicated and so secured the wonderful verdict that Mr. Fairbrother was a partisan. Is it any wonder that Lin-