

should be left free and untrammelled, and that was the rule until the present Postmaster General assumed that office. Take a case that has come under my own knowledge, in the west riding of York. Mr. J. P. Rupert, when I was a candidate in one of the election campaigns, was president of the Reform Association of the west riding of York. He conducted the campaign, and did all the duties pertaining to the presidency of the Liberal Association. He arranged for the meetings; he organized the campaign, and did all that work, and did it exceedingly well. He was likewise, during all that time, and for years afterwards, postmaster in the village of Maple, a position worth some hundreds of dollars per year. But I never made any attempt to have him removed, because I did not think that I had any right to interfere with him. He was performing his duties of postmaster properly, and that is all the department could require of him. I know some persons said that he was a Government officer, and should not interfere in politics. But that was not my feeling, and I did not see any reason why he should not take an active part, if he desired to do so. That was the rule that obtained until the present Postmaster General assumed that office. Now, without a moment's warning, a rule is made that has never been recognized before, a rule that any man, if he only receives \$20 a year, keeping a post office, not for his own benefit, but for the accommodation of the neighbourhood, as many hundreds and thousands of postmasters do, the Postmaster General says to these men: You are not to interfere in politics; you are permitted to vote, but that is the extent of your interference. I say, such a regulation is entirely unauthorized, that it is improper, that the Postmaster General has no right to assume that power. The letter read by the hon. member for Three Rivers (Sir Adolphe Caron) shows that the Postmaster General has written letters to men, saying that they have no right to take an active part in an election. What is to prevent a postmaster from doing so? Is there any law or regulation prohibiting postmasters from taking part in elections in this country? Of course, I do not refer to city postmasters, who are on the civil service list, but to those ten thousand postmasters throughout the country who are not on the civil service list. Is there any regulation prohibiting those men from interfering in politics?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. There are many obligations upon people in life for which you may not be able to point to any direct law compelling them. Public officers such as postmasters, I think, take office on an understanding that they will maintain political neutrality and keep aloof from political struggles. It is impliedly part of the conditions on which they assume the office. There is no law saying that a mem-

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ber of the permanent inside service should not take part in a political struggle, but the impropriety of it would be recognized.

Mr. WALLACE. There is a written obligation so far as the civil service is concerned; authorities have laid it down, precedent has established it, the rule is recognized, that a member of the civil service is not to take an active part in political matters. But no such rule exists with regard to these postmasters, or has ever existed in this country. The Postmaster General says there are unwritten obligations that are recognized in respect to postmasters. I say no such obligations have ever been recognized, from the fact that, until he came into office, there has been no dismissal of a postmaster for forty years in this country for political reasons.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The hon. gentleman is speaking without full knowledge of the facts. The postmaster of the city of Hull, Mr. Loucks, was dismissed without a moment's warning, after the election of 1878, for political reasons.

Mr. Fiset. In Rimouski and Matane, postmasters were dismissed for the same reason.

Mr. WALLACE. Was the postmaster of Hull in the civil service?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. He was postmaster in the city of Hull, the same as the other ten thousand the hon. gentleman refers to.

Mr. WALLACE. The postmaster in a city gets a salary, and is in the civil service. Hull being a city, the postmaster of that city is in the civil service.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The postmaster at Hull is on the same basis, as far as the office is concerned, as the postmaster in the smallest office in Canada. It is not a city post office.

Mr. WALLACE. I can say that the statement was made to me by a high official in the Post Office Department who knew and who ought to know, and it has been generally recognized. When the present Postmaster General went out on his various political campaigns, he gave it out to the postmasters that they must not interfere in elections. In North Grey, I know that he did so.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon. He cannot know it.

Mr. WALLACE. I know that the hon. gentleman interviewed a postmaster not far from Owen Sound and gave him a warning that he must not take an active part in the political campaign.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I never gave any such warning to any living man.