

being made, be summarily dismissed? Is that British precedent? Is that the administration of Canadian affairs? But that is what the Minister has done in this case. He appointed a man. He says there have been charges against that man; he has not investigated them; but without investigation, simply upon the charge, he has dismissed that man from the public service. Are the public servants of Canada holding their tenure of office on so slight a thread as that the Minister may one day appoint them and a few days after discharge them, without any charges being made against them by any one, without any charge being sustained or admitted to be sustained against them? No, Sir, the House must admit that it is a questionable transaction, that the hon. member for South Essex has made his point, that the Minister of Customs was not above using his official position in order to influence an election in one of the ridings of this country, even though he demoralized the public service, the service of his department, in order to accomplish it, and has been guilty throughout it of irregularities in the removal of Mr. McCormick and reappointing him, after insubordination, to the same position, and in the appointment of Mr. Atkinson and his subsequent dismissal without any charge being alleged against him. Sir, the Minister of Customs seems to justify these men as having acted properly and rightly in the discharge of their official duties. These different Customs officers, we have been told, went through the County of Essex appearing on a public platform and using their influence in the contest upon the Government side. He claims they had a perfect right to do so, and he instances the alleged fact that officers were found doing that on the other side, and so far as he was aware they have never been discharged. He was unfortunate in citing the case of the officers of Prince Edward Island, unfortunate, at least, from the circumstance that two of the prominent members from the Island were unable, from their own knowledge, to substantiate that statement which he had made. He alleges that on the Intercolonial Railway, at some place, men may have been dismissed who were taking an interest in elections. The two hon. members from that province state that these men were not dismissed because they took an active part in political matters, but because of insolence to superiors. Sir, we can understand that when the Government wish to discharge a man, they may, perhaps, be able to find some reason that will justify the action to themselves; but whether that be the case or no, the fact remains that this man Atkinson, appointed by the Minister, discharging the duties assigned him by the Minister and, so far as the Minister knows, discharging those duties efficiently and well, is summarily, without any cause being proved or established against him at all, removed from his position. Sir, I need not enlarge further on that point. It is well that it is not a controverted point. It stands in all its nakedness before the House, as presented by the hon. member for South Essex, a shocking transaction in its own character, as viewed I trust by the majority of the members of the House, and I regret that the Minister of Customs himself has not been able so to view it.

Mr. INGRAM. I would like to ask the hon. gentleman whether he approves of Ontario officials

taking part in provincial or Dominion elections, either on the platform or otherwise?

Mr. PATERSON (Brant). If the hon. member were not a new member, I think the Speaker would call his attention to the fact that he is not discussing the question at all. At the proper time and in the proper place, I will give the hon. gentleman the answer he wants.

Mr. INGRAM. In rising to ask the hon. gentleman this question, I believe that I am performing a public duty. A few years ago I entered the Provincial Legislature of this province, and I contended then, as hon. gentlemen are contending now, that civil servants should not be permitted to take part in elections. I am acquainted with the gentleman whose name has been brought before the House to-day, Mr. McCormick. I have known him for a number of years, and I believe he is competent to fill the position of collector of Customs for Pelee Island. I know also that there is a local prejudice against Mr. McCormick on that Island, caused by family quarrels and other things of that character. I do not pretend to justify the course taken by the Minister of Customs in this case, nor do I intend to condemn the Minister of Customs for his action on this occasion. I have thought it best to wait until the evidence was brought down to this House, in order that I might be in a position to judge whether he has done wrong or right. While a member of the Local Legislature I called the attention of the Government of this province to the fact that many civil servants were taking part in elections. I believe civil servants who are drawing money from the public treasury have no right to take part in elections, while I hold they have a right to cast their ballots in favour of whomsoever they please; but if they go beyond that, they were not doing their duty and should not be permitted to remain any longer in the service. The Government told me: Why did I not use my influence with my friends in Ottawa and have them carry out these views? I contend that so long as a man is in the Civil Service he has no right to go on a public platform and discuss public questions.

Mr. MULLOCK. What about Sir Charles Tupper?

Mr. INGRAM. I do not look on the High Commissioner as an ordinary public servant. I believe he was quite justified in the course he took in the last election, knowing that if the hon. gentlemen opposite came into power he would immediately cease to hold that position. If hon. gentlemen opposite are prepared, and if this Government is prepared, to frame a law that will deprive civil servants of the power to take an active part in elections, I am prepared to support it. But what astonishes me most is that hon. gentlemen opposite should rise in their places and condemn this Government for the very acts that are committed by the Provincial Government, which they support, and against which they have not a word to say. Hon. gentlemen opposite, when civil servants of the Local Government take part in their elections, should first condemn them for doing so, and then they could consistently ask the Dominion Government to prevent the civil servants of the country taking part in the elections.

Mr. McMULLEN. From the time I first had the honour to sit in this House, down to the pre-