

therein the Liberal party, present ourselves before Your Holiness as respectful and devoted children of Holy Church, to complain of the existence of a state of things, which if allowed to continue, must be extremely dangerous to the constitutional liberties of this country, as well as to the interests of the Church itself.

"Your Holiness has already been made aware of the conduct and attitude of certain prelates and of certain members of the secular clergy who, during the general election in this country in the month of June last, intervened in a violent manner in restraint of electoral freedom, taking sides openly for the Conservative party against the Liberal party, and going so far as to declare guilty of grievous sin those of the electors who would vote for the Liberal party.

"Sincerely attached to the institutions of our country which ensure to us Catholics the most complete liberty, we respectfully represent to Your Holiness that these democratic institutions under which we live and for which Your Holiness has many times expressed sentiments of admiration and confidence, can only exist under perfect electoral freedom.

"Far be it from us to refuse the clergy the plenitude of civil and political rights. The priest is a citizen, and we would not for a single instant, deprive him of the right of expressing his opinion on any matter submitted to the electorate; but when the exercise of that right develops into violence, and when violence in the name of religion, goes to the extent of making a grievous sin of a mere political act, there is an abuse of authority of which the consequences cannot but be fatal, not only to constitutional liberty, but to religion itself.

"If in a country such as ours, where a population consisting of persons of various creeds, and wherein the Protestant denominations are in the majority,