

which conduct does not justify. What does it all mean? Suppose the Liberals were wrong in 1896 and were guilty of injustice, is that a reason why the Conservative party of to-day should continue in that wrongful course? If so, let them say so. They have put themselves on record as being opposed to wholesale dismissals. They have professed higher ideals than that. Why do they now say, we will first dismiss the man if anybody makes what appears to be a charge against him and then will try him and if an injustice has been done, we will reinstate him. Let me say, very few of those who have been dismissed will be reinstated, investigation or no investigation. I happened to get the papers in connection with Captain Peter Decoste. I do not find that the defeated candidate made any charge against him of offensive partisanship. I do not find that any representation came from the county to which Decoste belongs. I do find letters from T. Gallant, and others asking that Decoste be dismissed and Captain Daniel Gillies of Port Hawkesbury be appointed. There is a sort of stereotyped letter signed by different parties asking for this change. These men were frankly acting on the principle laid down by hon. gentlemen opposite. They were manly about it, they said we want Decoste fired to make a place for Gillies a good Conservative, dismissed in 1896. There is not a hint or insinuation of any kind against Decoste. It is not alleged that he was an offensive partisan and it is not stated whether he is a Liberal or a Conservative, but all through the letters runs the word: 'We want Captain Decoste out of the way in order to make a place for Gillies'. What about Gillies? They, the minister's advisers in this matter say that he was dismissed in 1896 for absolutely no reason except that he favoured the Conservative party. In other words, they say he was a Conservative partisan in 1896 and yet they are going to replace this partisan. I do not see the difference whether a partisan is a Liberal or a Conservative if partisanship is to be a ground for dismissal. They asked that Gillies take the place of Decoste against whom no charge is made, for no other reason than because Gillies was a Conservative partisan. It is stated in one letter that he was dismissed because he was a Conservative and for no other reason. That is the letter of William Macdonald, President of the Pictou Conservative Club. There is also a letter from the Conservative Club of Inverness. They allege that Gillies was dismissed because of partisanship. As a matter of fact, he was continued in the service after 1896. He was mate on one of the dredges, I think the 'George Mackenzie', and was continued right up to the time of the last elections and afterwards. As a matter of

Mr. CHISHOLM (Antigonish).

fact, Captain Gillies was working on the government dredge 'George Mackenzie' the greater portion of the time the late liberal government was in power and on the eve of the elections. I have nothing against him. So far as I know he is a competent man and a good seaman, but he was rather unfortunate in his experience as a Captain. As I pointed out the other evening, he lost one of the dredges with its equipment and under his control there was a great deal of damage by an accident in another case, \$9,000 to \$12,000, and since his appointment on October 24, he ran the dredge 'Cape Breton' ashore. Or some accident occurred to the dredge under his charge at a serious loss to the country. It may be that this was simply his misfortune. One man who writes to the minister as shown by the correspondence brought down on this subject says that Captain Decoste has had no experience. That man did not know what he was talking about. Captain Decoste is a navigator of 25 years experience, holding the most complimentary certificates. He has had experience in the command of dredges and tug boats and is absolutely competent in every respect. No one who knows the facts or values the truth, will insinuate that he has not had experience and is not a competent and capable official. Why does not the minister come down clearly and explicitly and say: I dismissed Decoste because I wanted a place for Gillies who is no better than Decoste as far as the records show as an official but who is a good tory as it is represented to me and deserves well of our party.

Mr. CHISHOLM (Inverness). Will the hon. member read the letter purporting to be from the Conservative Association of Inverness?

Mr. CHISHOLM (Antigonish). Yes. It would seem that there was concerted action and they did not lose very much time. We have letters dated October 12, October 16 and October 24. The president of the Conservative Association writes as follows:

Inverness, C.B., Oct. 12, 1911.

Hon. F. D. Monk,  
Minister of Public Works,  
Ottawa P.O.

Dear Sir,—The Liberal-Conservative Association of the county of Inverness, C.B., strongly recommend the dismissal of Capt. Decoste, of the dredge 'Cape Breton,' now in Cape Breton waters, and the appointment in his stead of Capt. Daniel Gillies, of Port Hawkesbury, C.B. Immediately after the coming into power of the Liberal government in 1896, Capt. Gillies, a man of many years experience, was summarily dismissed without any alleged cause—

That is not true as I am informed.

—and Capt. Decoste, a man of no experience whatever—