

that I do not bring it up in a partisan spirit, but it is only fair to the Postmaster General himself that he should tell the committee on what principle he acted, how he came to appoint the partisan who labours under so many disqualifications and is on record for having been guilty of corrupt practices.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I have not seen the notice of motion to which the hon. gentleman refers, and I did not ask it to stand, but probably it stood as many motions are asked to stand, if they are debatable, or in my absence one of my colleagues may have asked that it be allowed to stand. I shall consider it my duty to examine the records and lay on the Table of the House all papers that bear on the question, and then the hon. gentleman will be furnished with all the information. I have not the faintest recollection of the details. I never heard of this action to which the hon. gentleman refers or the disqualification of Mr. Mathieson from holding any office in the gift of the local legislature. That circumstance in itself does not, however, technically disqualify one from holding a Dominion office, although some people might think it affects his personal fitness. I have made note of the matter, and I will endeavour to bring down the papers to-morrow.

Mr. GILLIES. I am not sure that I will be here when the Supplementary Estimates are discussed, but in case I am not, I will state now the position I would take then. I have given the committee the facts and have spoken from the original records as to this man's disability. In view of these facts I ask the Postmaster General if he will cause an inquiry to be instituted, and if the facts I have stated are borne out by the result, he will cause a change to be made in the person who holds the office.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I am not able to answer the question now. As regards the question of removal, it is unnecessary to have an inquiry on that point as it is not necessary to prove an admitted fact. The hon. member will have the opportunity of considering the charges and admissions and deciding on the action to be taken. As to whether a man should be removed from a Dominion office because he is disqualified under a local Act involves the opening up of another question. There are no doubt persons holding office who have been disqualified and are not entitled to vote for members of Parliament in another province or in the Dominion. I submit that the disqualification for a political offence does not per se disqualify a man from being a fit and proper person to act as postmaster.

Mr. GILLIES. I understand the position taken. The Postmaster General will admit that he did not know he was appointing a man resting under all these disabilities. The

Mr. GILLIES.

hon. gentleman removed one partisan and he has appointed another. He will acknowledge that he was seriously misled and badly advised. I take it that the Postmaster General would refuse to remove a man and appoint a partisan in his place. The responsibility now rests with the Postmaster General. I have brought the facts to his notice and I hope he will never commit a similar error again.

Mr. McALISTER. I wish to refer to the closing of the Oak Bay Mills post office in the county of Bonaventure, near the town where I live. In April I placed a question on the Order paper referring to the closing of the office. One of the questions was: "When was the office closed?" The answer I received from the Postmaster General was that it was closed on April 1st, 1897. But I found on further information being received from the postmaster at Oak Bay Mills and the receipts of the post office inspector, who closed the post office, that it was closed on March 13th, 1897.

Mr. BERGERON. Was it after the elections?

Mr. McALISTER. Four days before the elections. The 1st of April was a few days after the elections, and 13th March a few days before. I do not accuse the Postmaster General or the officials of having wilfully given a wrong date, but they have given a wrong date notwithstanding, whether in error or not, it is not for me to say. If the date given by the Postmaster was correct and the record shows the office to have been closed on 1st April, then the office was illegally closed by some subordinates without the authority of the Postmaster General.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Does the hon. gentleman remember why the office was closed?

Mr. McALISTER. I think a political reason is the only reason that can be assigned for it. Last year I asked for all the correspondence in regard to the closing of the office, and the only correspondence I got was covered by two letters signed by the Minister of Public Works, which I will read. One is dated Ottawa, March 5th, 1897, and reads as follows:—

Dear Mulock,—I spoke to you yesterday of the postmaster of Oak Bay, Bay des Chaleurs. The present postmaster has attended the Conservative convention and the Liberal candidate has made a complaint against him. I showed it to you. Now, Mr. Guite wires to me that there is no need of a post office at Oak Bay, and that it should be closed at once.

I inclose Mr. Guite's telegram. I think it should be acted upon, if your officers agree.

Yours truly,

(Sgd.) J. ISRAEL TARTE.

The second letter is dated Ottawa, March 10th, and reads as follows:—