

mountain out of a mole-hill. The Minister has had the reputation of being a very efficient man at the head of his department, but I fear he will lose his reputation in connection with this matter. What are the facts of the case? He takes exception to the statements made in the letter which was alluded to, and says he does not know whether that was so or not. My hon. friend says this letter was used among the electors with the intent of influencing the election. The Minister said he does not know anything about it, and that is the only answer. Here is a sub-collector of Customs at Pelee Island who is so obnoxious to some of the people of that island that they object to support the Government candidate, provided this officer is retained in his position. That came to the Minister's knowledge. He frankly admits that it came to his knowledge before this, and that he took the precaution of enquiring into the charges against this officer in order to see whether the objection taken was owing to his neglect of public duty, or was due to personal pique or private malice on the part of some who had feelings against him. The result was that he ordered Mr. Mewburn, the inspector of Customs, to visit that outport and report, and the Minister of Customs states that the report was that Mr. McCormick was discharging his duties in the public interests and in a satisfactory manner, and that any feeling against him was a local feeling and the result of a family feud that had sprung up there. Consequently the Minister left him in possession of his office. He did not deem that the fact of some of his relatives not desiring him to retain that office was a sufficient ground for removing him as long as he was discharging his duties satisfactorily in the public interest. If that is so, and no one finds fault with that, how comes it that, when he had already judged that man to be a proper man to retain in office, when he had the report of the official whom he sent there that he was a proper man to retain there, how comes it that, with no subsequent violation of duty on his part, the Minister of Customs, who had stood by this officer from 1888 to 1890, thinks proper on the eve of an election to remove that officer and appoint another in his place? Is that the way in which the Customs Department is administered? He does not deny that, from a village in the County of Northumberland, away from his department, away from his duties, he telegraphed, not that an appointment was intended to be made, but that the appointment of Mr. Atkinson had been made in place of Mr. McCormick, and that Mr. McCormick was to report himself at Windsor because they wanted an extra man there. Mr. Atkinson then assumes the position, but Mr. McCormick does not report to Windsor where they wanted additional help, but, in violation of the Customs rules and regulations, and by a clear act of insubordination, Mr. McCormick goes to the port of Amherstburg, where the Minister does not say he is required at all; and then, because he has been insubordinate and has not performed the duty he was ordered to perform, instead of his being punished, we find he is reinstated in his position, while the man who was appointed in his place is summarily dismissed. Is that the way the Customs Department is worked; that servants who are insubordinate and refuse to obey the demands of their superiors, are to be rewarded by being restored to their position again?

Mr. PATERSON (Brant).

Now, then, he says that Mr. Gott, the collector at Amherstburg, of which Pelee Island is an outport, might have felt a little chagrined about this, but he wanted them to understand that the heads of the department might do as they pleased in reference to this matter, but he was not bound to consult them. Does the Minister of Customs want the House and the country to understand that this Mr. Gott, who is the officer at Amherstburg, in which district Pelee Island is an outport, who himself says, as he has stated in the letter that was read by the member for South Essex, that he is responsible for the action of the sub-collector at Pelee,—does the Minister want us to understand that he is at liberty to appoint a man to that position without notifying the officer at Amherstburg, without receiving any instructions from him, and placing that man Atkinson in possession there, while the collector, under whom he worked, to whom he was responsible, who was responsible for his work, has no official communication in reference to that matter at all, and refuses to give him any instructions with reference to it? Sir, the action of the Minister of Customs was this: with the view, as I verily believe, of influencing the election, he placed this man, irresponsible, according to his own showing, in that outport of Pelee; that man was there giving clearances, acting in the name of Her Majesty, receiving Government fees, discharging the duties of the position, and he is there without any authority or responsibility to any one, and without any instructions from any one. That is the position in which the Minister has declared this matter to stand. Sir, the House, I think, will admit that of the many transactions of a questionable nature that have been brought to their notice, this, perhaps, is the most questionable of all. Viewed from whatever point you may view it, viewing the fact of the dismissal and the removal of a man against whom, he says, there was no charge of neglect of public duty, the subsequent insubordination of that officer after his removal, if we are to accept the testimony of the Minister; then after that his reappointment over this other man that had been placed there, and this man only being removed, because, as the Minister says, there were complaints against him as well as against McCormick. Well, he says he intends to send an officer up there to look into this charge against McCormick, and if he is really blameworthy, he intends to have him removed. Why did he not send his commission up before he removed Mr. Atkinson? Why did he not investigate the charges against Atkinson, the recently appointed man, appointed by himself? Why did he not give him an opportunity of an investigation? Why is he summarily dismissed, when receiving a salary at the rate of \$400 per annum, while McCormick, against whom the charges are made, and made so strong that he had him removed during the election, was appointed in his place? Sir, I think the position of the Minister of Customs will not bear investigation on that point. They talk about the American system. What has that to do in reference to the cause of the dismissal of Atkinson, that the Minister of Customs should have referred to it? What is that but the American system? Is it the Canadian system? Is it the British system, that a man who is appointed by a Minister to a position in the Civil Service of Canada, shall, without any charge being proved against him, without an investigation