

were merely extra carpenters; however, John McGillivray, Wm. F. McDonald, John J. McDougall and John McDonald have been employed for the last two days in putting in a culvert near Pine Hill bridge, about four miles east of New Glasgow. There have been no dismissals for political causes approved by me, except these two, and another that I spoke of this afternoon, in which I acted on the strong representations and statements of an hon. member of this House, that the person against whom he made this charge had been actively participating in the elections. These are the only three cases of which I have knowledge. If gentlemen opposite choose to characterize the statement I make, as to the course I ought to pursue, as a mean course, as an unworthy course, I can only make them a present of their judgment and opinion upon the question. I can truly say that I do not set a high value upon the opinion which they entertain of what is a manly and honourable course. I think it infinitely more manly and more honourable than the course which hon. gentlemen opposite unquestionably pursued in their administration of the railway department in this country. That is not too much to say, for, as the hon. Finance Minister stated this afternoon, there was a system of terrorism prevailing from one end of the line of railway to the other. The workman or employee who was in sympathy with the Liberal party dare not whisper the fact to his nearest neighbour. He dare not let it be breathed, lest he should be dismissed the service, or that means would be taken to prevent him exercising his franchise. I think it is infinitely meaner to resort to expedients to prevent a citizen of this country, upon whom the law has conferred the franchise, from casting his ballot freely. I think it is infinitely meaner treatment, and I prefer being classed as mean and brutal among the men who will take pains to satisfy their honest judgment as respects a charge made against a servant of the public—no matter whether he be high or low—and, if satisfied, acts upon the conclusion at which he then arrives, rather than with these truly honourable men who terrorize the independent electors of the country who happen to be in the Government employ. One word to the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Bell). I was correctly reported when I was represented as saying that, so long as I remained at the head of this department, so long as I was capable of exercising any influence over its administration, I would see to it that the men employed by the department are left free to cast their ballots according to their honest judgment. I never will sanction or permit the use of any means to deprive them of that privilege. If the labouring classes of the country are led by the misinterpretation of my words and meaning persisted in by gentlemen opposite to think me capable of treating them unjustly, then I am afraid I must allow them to retain that judgment and entertain that opinion.

Mr. DYMENT. It may be on account of my youth, but for whatever the reason, it seems to me, I am more appreciative of a joke than some hon. members of this House. To me it seems extremely funny to observe the righteous indignation of these hon. gentlemen on this side of the House on behalf of the poor workingman. And yet all the time they were in power, during the last eighteen years, almost every man employed under them has been nothing but a slave. These men could not even exercise the right to vote as they saw fit. I have instances of this here to which I wish to draw the particular attention of the hon. member for Annapolis (Mr. Mills). The hon. gentleman says he came into this House in 1887, I think. The policy of the Conservative party at that time, he says, was that before an official could be dismissed, a complaint must be made and the charge investigated and substantiated. Now, in that very year, 1887, occurred an incident that proved the contrary. In 1884, one of the officials in the Customs Department was removed from Winnipeg to Port Arthur. In 1887, he was summarily dismissed. If I may be permitted, I will read an extract from his letter:

In 1884 I was sent to Port Arthur from Winnipeg in the Customs service to assist Collector Nicholson, who was the only officer at that port at the time. I was there until the close of 1887, when I was dismissed to make room for a secretary of the Conservative Association of Port Arthur, and one of their most zealous workers. In all my time in the Customs service I took no part in politics whatever, but somehow they found me out and I had to go.

The sleuth hounds were on his track. They found that he had voted Liberal, and he had to go. He asked the reason, and this is what was written by the head of the Customs Department, Sir Mackenzie Bowell:

Department has a high appreciation of your services as an officer, but the Government could not overlook the claims of the Port Arthur Conservatives.

Mr. SPROULE. Name.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order, order.

Mr. SPROULE. I rise to a point of order. I want to know if the hon. gentleman is not bound to give the name of the writer. I believe that the rules provide for that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER. I do not understand that the hon. gentleman is bound to give the name of the writer of a private letter.

Mr. DYMENT. The hon. member for Annapolis (Mr. Mills) was asked to give the name. At first, he said he would, but his friends behind him told him not to, and he did not.

Mr. WOOD (Brockville). I think hon. gentlemen will agree with me that no judge in any court would allow a letter to be read