

state my position, not in order to vindicate myself, which is a matter of very little consequence, but to exonerate the great body of honourable electors in this city from the odium that it is sought to attach to them on account of the action of a certain few, who are popularly supposed to represent them.

Having had experience of the honourable bearing of most of those who supported me at the last election for the Commons, I am confident in asserting that fully ninety-nine in a hundred of these electors of West Hastings would have proposed just as I had suggested respecting contemplated changes in the Belleville post office. I may say that I was scarcely consulted at all in the matter, but the opinion I gave to those who did ask it was this, namely,—that if it was found necessary in the public interest to reduce the expense of the office here (which I understand all parties thought excessive), it would be better, under the circumstances, not to alter the status of the office in the Civil Service, but to reduce the staff if it was apparent that more were being employed than were needed. On the other hand, if the Postmaster General, who is the responsible head, insisted on taking the office out of its present standing, that then in that case the postmaster ought to be directed to employ what help was needed from the existing staff of employees if willing to accept the salary provided and were found capable and efficient.

Yours respectfully,

THOS. RITCHIE.

I may say those were the views of Conservatives and Liberals alike. There was scarcely any one in the city who did not think there were more officers in the service than were absolutely necessary, and had the policy of the Postmaster General been carried out generally, no fault would have been found. The Postmaster General's defence of the action which has been taken is simply this, that he desires, as a trustee of the public funds, to administer the affairs of his office at the lowest possible expenditure. To that policy no one will object. Had he reduced all the offices to which I have called attention and placed them in the same category, with the exception perhaps of Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, no one would have found fault with him. It is only justice that I should say here that the excuse for keeping Windsor in the position it occupies—although it is not a legitimate excuse—is the fact that it is a large distributing office immediately on the frontier, receiving largely mail matter from the United States. We can readily understand also how it is that the expenditure in the Ottawa post office exceeds the income. It is on account of its being the seat of government, and large quantities of mail matter pass through, as you are all aware, without paying postage. I have already given a reason which has been advanced why the expenditure in the Charlottetown post office exceeds the revenue, but there is no reason

why, in all other cases, they should not be reduced in the same manner that the Belleville office has been reduced, if the Postmaster General intended his policy to be honestly carried out. The defence put in by the Postmaster General with reference to these reappointments is, that having reduced the Belleville post office to a town office, he left the reappointment of the different clerks to the acting postmaster; but when the papers come down you will find that when that instruction was given to the present acting postmaster (for a postmaster has not yet been appointed), a proviso is made in the letter, that in any appointment which he makes it must be made in accordance with the recommendation of the Reform Association of Belleville. The Reform Association of Belleville met in solemn conclave, this little knot to which Mr. Ritchie refers, and with whom he is not at all in accord, and insisted that these two parties to whom I have referred should not be re-employed, but that a son of a Grand Trunk employee, who is a Liberal, should receive one of the positions, and that a daughter of a former president of the Reform Association and a former defeated Liberal candidate in West Hastings, should have the other, depriving the young lady and young gentleman, who were the partial support of their parents, of the positions which they had held. I have also shown you that the policy has not been carried out in other cities. There are only three of the whole of the city offices in the Dominion whose expenses are not proportionately greater than those of Belleville, but fortunately for those cities they are represented by Liberal members; and you can easily understand that if the Postmaster General proposed to reduce Charlottetown to a town office, what a hue and cry there would be from Sir Louis Davies. You can readily understand, if it were proposed to reduce St. John to a town office, what a protest would come from the two gentlemen who represent that city in the House of Commons. So in the case of Quebec, what a protest there would be from Mr. Dobell and Mr. Malouin if Quebec was to be degraded from a city office to a town office for the reason assigned by the Postmaster General in the case of Belleville, that it would cost the country a great deal less to manage the business of these different offices under the new system than under the present system. Now, I am not defend-