

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. The Auditor did.

Mr. DICKEY. The hon. gentleman says we could do nothing without the Auditor General. I am not here to find the slightest fault with the office of Auditor General; it is not only a very desirable office, it is almost a necessary office. The hon. gentleman said that previous to the appointment of an Auditor General, in 1878, the people of the country knew nothing about the finances.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) No; I said the details.

Mr. DICKEY. I beg to remind the hon. gentleman that the Opposition in the days before 1878 took very good care that the people understood the details and the general plan of the finances, and without the assistance of an Auditor General they showed so many irregularities on the part of hon. gentlemen who now sit opposite that they were forced into Opposition, where they have remained ever since. So although this is a very important office, still it is not an office absolutely essential to enable the people to understand the finances, and the vigorous opposition was quite as good in that way as is an Auditor General himself. What is the gist of this matter? This is not a large question in extent, though perhaps it is in principle. There are two matters at issue here between hon. gentlemen sitting on the opposite sides of the House. The first is: Should this petition be considered by the House? The next is: What action should be taken upon it? In the first place, with respect to the presentation of the petition to the House, I do not suppose it is unconstitutional, or that it should be ruled out of order, although there might be some ground for a contention of that sort. But I submit to the House in all sincerity that, if this is a practice which it is desirable for this House to favour, what is the result of the Auditor General's request? It is that the Governor in Council shall take action with respect to his department, either by the promotion of clerks, by the appointment of new clerks or by the granting of money for extra clerks. Therefore the Auditor General, who is a civil servant, is coming to Parliament by petition, and asking that the hand of the executive be forced with respect to the disposition of public money. Is it to be said here, that the Deputy Minister of any of the different departments—

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) Will the hon. gentleman pardon me. I am quite sure he would not want to do an injustice to the hon. gentleman. I may have misread his petition, but if I have read it correctly, the Auditor does not ask anything except that a committee of both sides be struck to see how far his demands might be reasonable.

Mr. DICKEY. Quite so. Does the hon. gentleman think it a proper system to obtain, that the deputy heads of the various departments of the Government should petition Parliament to review the acts of the Executive?

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) No.

Mr. DICKEY. Certainly not. Sir, if there is one thing that strikes a man who comes to Ottawa and remains here for a few years, it is that here, as in other countries, there is a tendency in human nature for a man to magnify his office. There is a tendency for a man who has become the head, or a permanent officer of a department, to become wedded to the routine of that office, and I do not know any officer in which that is more patent than in the Auditor General himself. He began a very humble individual, discharging functions which he thought the Parliament of Canada had placed upon his shoulders, and discharging them properly. The hon. gentlemen opposite got hold of his report, and they began to praise the Auditor General, and to persuade him that he was the 'imperium in imperio,' that he was the man on whom they depended for all the material they found against the Government, and from the time that the Auditor General fell under the evil influence of the counsel of hon. gentlemen opposite, he began to magnify his office. I ask any hon. gentleman who is unprejudiced to read that clause in the petition to which the Minister of Justice has referred:

As long as your petitioner is in his present office, no matter what party holds the reins of power, every effort will be made to keep the financial affairs right, and in cases where it is impossible to do that, to make it as clear as possible to the taxpayers of the country wherein, in his opinion, the wrong consists.

I ask any hon. gentleman to read that and tell me, if it is not the utterance of a man who is so puffed up with the office he holds and the functions he discharges, that really he begins to consider himself the whole electorate, and the whole Opposition, and the whole press of the country as well. He says, I will do this. I will keep financial affairs right, and if I cannot keep financial affairs right, I will inform the country about it. That is the utterance—not in the slightest degree of a man who is actuated by any improper motive—but it is the utterance of a man who is suffering from this disease of official magnificence which I have described.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) That disease is very contagious.

Mr. DICKEY. I have not myself been long enough in office to acquire it.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) We are warning you.

Mr. DICKEY. I do not think the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) will acquire it for some time to come.