

because the temporary staff had not been employed. In this connection I shall read the case which came before this house in 1888 when Sir John A. Macdonald was prime minister, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier moved an amendment against the Speaker's action, where it was pointed out that first of all it is provided, not by custom but by the *lex scripta*, by the written law of parliament, that no man can be taken from his position in this house unless a complaint has been made against him or before he has had an opportunity to be heard in his defence.

I pass by one employee of this chamber who had served under four sovereigns. He received that notice, and I have spoken to others who received it. Many of them were appointed by the right hon. Prime Minister—not by him personally, but by his administration. Sir, I ask the House of Commons this question: Can it be said that one who is capable of sending such a notice into the homes of men and women of this country indicating that they would not be employed after the 31st day of January can be looked upon with confidence by hon. members seated on this side of the house?

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. BENNETT: That is the question. This is a painful matter for me, because I have to go on and refer—

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. BENNETT: Yes. I will read what Mr. Laurier, as he then was, said under similar circumstances. I want to do more: I want to be fair to the Prime Minister and to his government. I believe that as soon as the Prime Minister heard that this had taken place he took immediate steps to stop it. I believe that a committee of this government took steps, because returned men with families were stunned over a week end by a notice of this kind. I am told many of those men are now living from day to day in a state of uncertainty. Many who had served nine or ten years, some longer than that, and who received this notice, thus found their households disturbed, their lives made unhappy, and their whole existence threatened.

I wish to acquit the Prime Minister of any part or parcel in this matter. In the bitterness of party strife, governments have to do many things. The pressure of their followers, the pressure of constituencies—all these things are known to all of us. But I will say this: I do not believe this was done with the Prime Minister's knowledge, and I was proud to think that the Prime Minister of this country, as soon as it was brought to

his attention, took immediate steps in the matter. He did not pause; he acted at once and notices cancelling the earlier ones were immediately sent out. I congratulate him and I thank him, if he will permit me to do so, for having seen that such action was taken. It was creditable to him; it was creditable to this House of Commons that this should have been done because there is a statute governing such matters, and it was in defiance of that statute that action was taken by one who had not been elected to any office but who might very properly hope to be; but who, not content, as he might have been, with providing for the administration of the House of Commons by employing temporary help—and every session sees temporary help engaged, and everybody knows that temporary help is as largely as possible secured from among those who are friendly to the administration; I am not going to be hypocrite enough for a single moment to say otherwise—took action such as I have indicated. What, I ask, would be thought in England if any man would rise in his place and propose as Speaker one who had violated the provisions of a statute that he must have known of, one who is a king's counsel, a member of the legal profession, anxious to know what his position was, and one who must have known what was involved in taking the action that he did.

That raises another question. The Clerk of this House of Commons has made a statement to the press. I know not how accurately he was reported. I shall content myself by saying that according to the report he said that he was dealing with appointments on the political side, and that there had been a great misunderstanding in respect of these matters. I do not know how far this report in the paper correctly represents what the clerk of the house said, and I shall therefore refrain from saying anything more than that if he did say what he is reported to have said, there should be an instant inquiry.

Now I go further. It is quite clear, sir, to every thoughtful man that what has taken place with respect to the administration of this House of Commons must come before the committee on privileges. How can it be otherwise? The privileges of this house have been invaded. A statute has been overridden. Action has been taken that is in violation of all the dignity and privilege of this House of Commons—a violation not of the unwritten law, but of the *lex scripta*, the written law of the country. There must be an inquiry. And what position are we to be in if we have our own Speaker putting the motion, as he will be compelled to do, and as has been done in Eng-