

Mr. MITCHELL. I certainly must express my surprise that in a debate of this kind, the hon. gentleman who has last spoken, should undertake to make the criticisms he has done upon gentlemen upon this side of the House in their absence. I have no right to speak for anybody on this side of the House, except myself, unless I may be classed among the bolters, as I sometimes am; and I shall only be too happy to speak for them, or to have them speak for me, when occasion calls for it. But I am surprised that the hon. gentleman should attempt to make a comparison between the cases of the gentlemen on his side of the House and those of the gentlemen to whom he referred, from the Maritime Provinces. Does the hon. gentleman not know that the hon. member for St John (Mr. Weldon) left in a legal capacity, on a most important matter, which has occupied the city of St. John many a day—the failure of one of the great banking institutions—and that he has been away for several days? Does the hon. gentleman not know that the hon. gentleman from the city of Quebec, whose absence he commented upon, is detained from his place in this House by the sickness, almost unto death, of his wife? And I must say, I think it extremely bad taste for him to make the reference he has done. Does he not also know that it is a matter of current rumor that the hon. member for Queen's, P.E.I. (Mr. Davies) is only kept away by the fact that his wife is in a delicate and critical condition, which has prevented him from being present during the present Session. Well, Sir, I think it adds to the bad taste of the hon. gentleman that he should lead in laughter at what I have said about the very improper remarks he made in regard to that gentleman. No one who knows Mr. Davies will deny that if travelling night and day could bring him here to vote on this question he would come, and there is no man on either side of the House less liable to shirk his vote than he. I have no right to speak for these gentlemen, but in their absence I think it my duty to express my disapproval of the remarks the hon. gentleman has made. Is there any similarity between their absence and the absence of the members of the Cabinet? Where is the Premier of the Dominion when a matter is under discussion that affects the interest of the whole Empire? Why is he not in his place to give the House his opinion upon it, and to advise them what course they ought to take on a question to which the hon. gentleman says there is no partyism? If there is not, why is not the Premier here to give his assistance in a matter affecting the political relations not alone of Canada, but of an integral portion of the Empire, and one affecting the social relations with the great nation to the south of us, which contains many millions of Irishmen and Irish descendants. If there ever was a question before this House demanding the calmest and coolest consideration of its members, it is the question we are considering to-night. Why is the hon. member for Cumberland (Sir Charles Tupper) not in his place? Why is the hon. member for Cardwell (Mr. White) not in his place? And why is not the hon. Secretary of State? Everyone of these gentlemen knew that this vote was coming on. They knew that it was postponed last night. Was it postponed to give them an opportunity of being absent? I am not prepared to say that such is the case, but the matter certainly looks a little suspicious. I am not going to take up much of the time of the House, after this question has been so fully discussed on both sides; but it is a matter of too much importance for me to give a silent vote upon it. My sympathies are in favor of giving self-government to every section of the Empire capable of it; and will any man here say that with the intelligence, the valor and the talents the Irish people have shown in all positions they have occupied in the Empire and out of it, they are not entitled to the fullest measure of Home Rule? I think no man will say it. Then why not give it to them? The British Government

have tried coercion; they have tried suppression of liberty and public speech; they have adopted every course to bring about quietness and peace in Ireland, except conciliation and have failed. Now that the Premier and the hon. Minister, of the Interior have come into the House, I may repeat what I said in their absence, that I was surprised that they were not present on such an important occasion to direct this House what course it ought to pursue. If they were absent under circumstances which they could not control, they can perhaps explain that. I was about to repeat the words of an eloquent English statesman: "We have tried everything but kindness, let us try kindness [now]." What does this Coercion Bill propose to do? If the House will bear with me for a few moments, I will read from a paper a description of it given more succinctly than I can do it. It says:

"But few persons living in this age know anything about the 'Whiteboy Acts' passed by Irish Parliaments of last century, for the violation of which men are to be tried before a court of summary jurisdiction if the Coercion Bill of the present British Government becomes a law, and yet it is by the reviving of these Acts, or rather by making them a part of the Coercion Bill, that the extraordinary temper of the Government toward Ireland is most clearly shown. By the terms of the Act of 1776, to which the Coercion Bill particularly refers, any person who, armed with any offensive weapon, or disguised, or 'wearing any particular badge, dress, or uniform not usually worn by him, or assuming any particular name or denomination not usually assumed by his Majesty's subjects, shall rise, assemble, or appear by day or night to the terror of his Majesty's subjects,' was guilty of a misdemeanor. This was the clause which gave rise to the famous line in the ballad:

'They're hanging men and women there for the wearing o' the green.'

"This clause was subsequently repealed, but the penalty of hanging still remains for the sending of threatening letters, for attempting to rescue a prisoner committed on a capital charge, and for a variety of other misdemeanors.

"The Act of 27 George III, chapter 5, which is also made a part of the Coercion Bill, makes death the penalty for unlawful meeting, and for the printing of any document tending to incite a riot. Sundry amendments have been made to the Acts since their original passage, but the number of offences for which indictments may be found under them has by no means decreased. Under the Whiteboy code sending a threatening letter, compelling another man to leave his farm, habitation, or lawful employment, maliciously causing any door to be opened by threats or menaces, rescuing a prisoner, and imposing an unlawful oath, are all criminal offences, and if the coercion law passes they may all be passed upon by courts of summary jurisdiction completely under the control of the Government at Dublin Castle. These are all serious offences and worthy of severe punishment, but they cannot, except in a spirit of pure tyranny, or without wrenching justice very materially, be taken from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of the land in which the offences are committed.

"Under the Whiteboy Acts the Government may, if it chooses, make a criminal offence of almost any act committed by an opposing political party. Under the Act of 27 George III, chapter 15, which is expressly included in the Coercion Bill, twelve persons meeting together and not dispersing on the proclamation of the magistrate, or not dispersing when the magistrate has been prevented from making such proclamation, are guilty of felony and may be sentenced to death. This Act puts an end to all meetings of the opposition should a magistrate be found bold enough to enforce it. But the most oppressive of the Whiteboy Acts is section 3, chapter 44 of 1 and 2 William IV, which practically muzzles the press of Great Britain. This section is worthy of reproduction, as showing the extent to which the enemies of Home Rule are willing to go in the way of coercion. It reads:

"And be it enacted, that if any person or persons shall knowingly print, write, post, publish, circulate, send or deliver, or cause or procure to be printed, written, posted, published, circulated, sent or delivered, any notice, letter or message exciting or tending to excite any riot, tumultuous or unlawful meeting or assembly, or unlawful combination or confederacy, or threatening any violence, injury or damage upon any condition or in any event or otherwise, to the person or property, real and personal, of any person whatsoever, or demanding any money, arms, weapons or weapon, ammunition or other matter or thing whatsoever (for example, asking reduction of rent), or directing or requiring any person to do or not to do any act, or to quit the service or employment of any person, or to set or to give out any land, every person so offending shall be liable to be transported beyond the seas."

"These are but samples of the provisions of the Whiteboy Acts which the coercionists intend to place within the jurisdiction of summary courts of procedure. They are the laws of Great Britain to-day. But many of them have been looked upon as obsolete, especially the clause just quoted. The Coercion Bill, if it becomes law, will revive them in all their original force, and with them will revive the spirit of lawlessness which first prompted their passage."

Now, I ask this House if it were proposed to legislate in that sense in Canada, how long would we stand it? Is it possible to believe that any legislature within the bounds of