

man. There is another important matter, and that is as to using the testimony already taken before the Privileges and Elections Committee. It will be remembered that in opposing the motion which led to the appointing of this commission, the Minister of Marine took the ground that some \$10,000 of public money had already been expended in obtaining testimony on oath before the Committee on Privileges and Elections. Now, the question of expenditure is very subordinate to the question of efficiently dealing with this matter, and I think it would save a great deal of trouble and in other ways be found useful, if the commissioners could avail of the sworn evidence already reported to this House by the committee. I especially can urge this upon the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and upon the Solicitor General, and upon the junior member for Halifax (Mr. Russell), because they have stated that in their judgment there was nothing in that testimony of very serious import to the parties who practically were on their trial. Under these circumstances, I hope there will be no objection to utilizing this testimony which would so greatly facilitate the work of the commission.

I have only one more point to add, and that is upon a matter not dealt with at all by the order in council. I suggest to the right hon. the Prime Minister the absolute necessity of dealing with the Brockville and West Huron elections. This commission has grown out of the excitement produced in the country by what has been proven to have taken place in these elections, and we cannot put out of sight the fact that evidence given in the local elections of Ontario has also thrown a flood of light upon this subject, showing how widespread was this particular form of corruption which strikes at the very foundation of what the Prime Minister very properly termed, the sacredness of the ballot. It is this which led the right hon. gentleman to the very sound conclusion, that the time had come when it was absolutely the duty of the government, the duty of parliament, the duty of every person, to take means to secure that electoral contests in Canada shall result in giving the independent verdict of the honest electorate. Every Canadian is bound to facilitate by all possible means the exposure and the prompt punishment of acts that contravene the sacredness of the ballot. I may say to my right hon. friend, that while I feel that as matters stand—this commission having grown out of the discussion of the motion of my hon. friend (Mr. Borden) to refer the evidence taken last session, and to continue the investigation before a committee of this House—while I feel that my right hon. friend is warranted in saying that a still more satisfactory tribunal than that, would be a commission of independent judges to deal with the subject; yet I believe I am justified in pressing upon him that in the

present temperament of the public mind the evidence reported to this House should be available to the commissioners. I do not want my right hon. friend to suppose for a moment that any person on this side of the House shrinks from the fullest and most complete investigation, and the going back as far as in the judgment of the commissioners is necessary, to bring to the light of day wrong-doing on the part of any one. If it can be shown that any persons acting for the Liberal-Conservative party have lent themselves directly or indirectly to the perpetration of these frightful frauds upon the independent electors of Canada, I want to see them exposed. I speak in the name of the great party I have the honour to lead when I say, that the commissioners should go back as far as hon. gentlemen may wish, so that the fullest investigation may take place irrespective of who it may strike. On both sides of this House we have a common interest in this: every man in Canada who has regard for the purity of elections; every man who has regard for the character of Canada as a free country; all have a common interest in having this matter investigated in the most complete manner possible, and in having any persons who may have infringed on so vital a law of the land as that which deals with the independence of the electorate, brought to condign punishment whoever they be, and wherever they may be found.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). Mr. Speaker, though I am not prepared to agree in every particular with the remarks which have been offered to the House by my hon. friend, I certainly have no fault to find with the manner and the tone in which he has offered them; and indeed, I may say, it affords me and the government some gratification to find that on the whole the personnel of the commission and the scope of the commission appointed to investigate these electoral frauds, seem to be satisfactory to himself and that side of the House.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. As far as it goes.

The PRIME MINISTER. As far as it goes. The object of this commission, as the hon. gentleman has stated, is to probe to the bottom the electoral frauds which in a free country cannot be tolerated if we are to preserve what is after all the basis of parliamentary government, that is to say, an absolutely free electorate. I am glad to observe, from the remarks made by my hon. friend, that he thinks we have that object in view; but in his opinion this object would be better served if we were to amend the commission in a few particulars. My hon. friend suggested at the outset that the commission should be instructed to investigate fraudulent practices or means connected therewith. I may say that our purpose was to clothe the judges with the amplest powers