

Parliament last session, that an entirely different line of procedure would be taken in reference to the dismissal of officials. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Laurier) declared, that no official would be dismissed without an investigation, unless of course, the Minister in charge of the department directly knew that the officer was guilty of offensive partisanship. Let me read his own words :

No Minister would pretend to dismiss any official unless he had an opportunity to defend himself ; but when the case is within the personal knowledge of the Minister himself, under such circumstances there is no cause for inquiry. When the Minister is not cognizant of the facts himself, whenever a case is brought to him by extraneous evidence, these statements must be substantiated, and every man must be given an opportunity to defend himself.

I ask the Prime Minister, the Premier of this country, the leader of this House, what attitude he is taking to-day in this connection ? Is he prepared to defend the conduct of the Postmaster General in dismissing a man whom he the Prime Minister pledged himself before this Parliament to protect ? He gave his word as a man of honour, as the leader of the Government, as the Premier of this country, that no official would be dismissed without having an opportunity to defend himself, but, Sir, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Laurier) has not shown himself equal to the occasion. He has permitted somebody, whoever it may be, to belittle him in the eyes of the community and to belittle him in the eyes of this House as well, when he allows himself to be dragged down from his high position as leader of this Government to listen to what petty charges may be brought in by individual members of the party, and when he descends to gratify the spleen or the vicious desire of the heelers of the party to get positions for their friends. This dismissal of Mr. Fairbrother is more than an ordinary one, because he was an exceptionally good man. He was the postmaster of the village in which the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Gibson) resides. He has not only the good-will of the citizens generally, but, without any allegiance to party whatever, he has the sympathy and cordial support of both Reformers and Conservatives alike in that municipality. I want to read, for the information of the House, an editorial that was published in the Beamsville "Express" of April 7th :

In the Toronto "Globe" of yesterday we noticed an item regarding this subject, originating in a reply to a question proposed by Mr. McCleary, and answered by the Minister of the Interior. In the answer given by the Minister, Mr. Fairbrother, the recent incumbent of the office, is accused of being guilty of many offences, some of them very serious ones, any of which, if proven, might be sufficient to procure his dismissal. But the question is, have the offences, or any of them, been proven ? Have the accuser and accused been brought face to face, so that an opportunity was afforded for disproving the charges made ?

If this has not been done—and we believe it has not—there has been a serious failure of justice. We have no personal object to answer in the matter, but we do love British fair-play, and so far as we are able to ascertain the views of a large portion of the community, irrespective of political leanings, they judge that Mr. Fairbrother has not had a fair opportunity of vindicating himself. His character has been seriously maligned by some one, and all he asks is that a thorough investigation takes place. To this we think he has a right.

Will any one question the right of Mr. Fairbrother to have an investigation in this matter ? The publisher of this paper is not a political friend of Mr. Fairbrother. The Liberals in that neighbourhood were strongly opposed to his dismissal. Let me read to you a letter written by a Liberal, whom my hon. friend from Lincoln will recognize as a warm supporter of his own—a letter which was published in the Beamsville "Express" of April 14th :

To the Editor of the "Express" :

Dear Sir.—The charges made in the Commons against Mr. W. D. Fairbrother, the Beamsville postmaster, as published in the daily "Globe" of Tuesday, are to us residents here simply astounding. The catalogue of offences, any one of which, if proven, would be enough to remove him, stretch out over one-third of a column of the paper. Burglary and arson are pretty much all that is not down in the list. The exceedingly off-hand style of throwing out in the House and through the press over the country charges affecting the character and conduct of one occupying a public and responsible position is not edifying. I suppose the privileges of Parliament may protect those who can claim its protection, but there surely must be somewhere a weighty responsibility attaching to those who have originated and given currency to these damaging allegations.

As regards the merits, nine out of ten of the persons doing business at the Beamsville post office, and knowing in what manner the office is conducted, will readily testify, if opportunity be given, that the office has never been administered so satisfactorily and upon such straight business lines, as it has since Mr. Fairbrother came into the office. He is really an exceptionally good postmaster—young, active, courteous, very regular and attentive to duty. I do not know how any one can speak too highly of him as a public servant in an office requiring uncommon patience and kindness of disposition, with great quickness, accuracy and activity of mind and habit. Not myself giving very much time to politics, I yet have a warm interest in clean, good government, and am a Reformer. I am in a reasonable degree certain that Mr. Fairbrother has not discriminated as is alleged, in favour of Tory against Reform literature as to post office delivery or circulation, that he was not a Tory canvasser outside, nor a Tory scrutineer inside, any polling place last June, and that he has not been an active partisan anywhere at any time. Negatives cannot be proved, but certainly, if any of the charges of political partisanship are true, they are susceptible of proof—in an open, face to face investigation. As he was too young to be put upon the last Dominion lists, his sins must be within somebody's recollection besides the person furnishing the information to the Government.

There is in our village a standing Reform committee, or political organization to look after Re-