

Minister confessed to parliament that one point in connection with an important matter with which the hon. Minister of Justice had dealt had not occurred to the mind of the government, and that the comparison we had with chapter 10 of the Revised Statutes relating to corrupt practices, as copied from the Imperial Act, with 33 Victoria, chapter 52, had not been made. He went on to suggest the only possible answer, which I will consider in a moment, the one made by the Minister of Railways and Canals to-night, when he endeavoured to make out that the opinions of Sir John Thompson and Mr. Blake were at variance on a question of policy of that kind. We cannot attach to an opinion of that kind the importance we would ordinarily attach to it, and I mention it by way of brushing it aside so far as having any final authority with this House in the consideration of this matter is concerned. Here then we stand, proposing, on this side of the House, that every doubt be removed, that a thorough investigation be made, not merely into the practices, as the hon. gentleman said to-night, that prevailed, not merely into the acts that occurred, the actual tampering with the ballots, but, in the line of the pledge that the Prime Minister gave after formal debate at the time to which I refer, into everything connected with these practices, into all the surrounding circumstances, in order to draw aside the veil from the men who used the criminals, who made the criminals, who aided and abetted them. No one pretends that when you prove that one man or another actually tampered with the ballots, switched them, or committed any crime at the election, the investigation ought to end. The men that were behind the criminals prompting these crimes, these frauds, and the system under which the frauds were organized, are the men that the country wishes to know about. That is what we want to know in this House, so that when the inquiry is over we may, by legislation or otherwise, take steps to prevent a recurrence of these frauds, the existence of such corrupt organizations and of such a system in this country. With that object in view, is it reasonable that the government should maintain stubbornly their opposition, and while professing that the language of the commission covers all the points that we desire to be covered, is it a reasonable position for them to take to say that they will not change a word, that they will not change a sentence in regard to the scope of the inquiry? I submit that their action will not be considered in that light by the country, that they are taking upon themselves a huge and tremendous responsibility before the country. We upon this side of the House, venture no positive opinion as to the absolute accuracy of the views we have put forward. The commission may not entertain them, it may proceed upon the line that the Minister

SIR CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER.

of Railways and Canals has laid down in his argument, as it might widen the commission, as we all desire it should be widened, so that everything should be taken in. But if the inquiry becomes a farce as other inquiries under commissions issued under this government have become a farce, the responsibility on the shoulders of the government will be great indeed. I have referred to this point of the scope of the commission, and I do not wish to deal more fully with that, because I do not think I will add much to that which has already been said by the hon. senior member for Halifax. The difference between the hon. senior member for Halifax and the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals, let me just say as to the question of the scope of the commission, is that the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals constantly refers to the ample language and the proper language empowering this commission to investigate into the practices which prevailed, and the hon. member for Halifax asks that he should go much further than that and that there should be no doubt as to the power and duty of the commission to inquire into the circumstances surrounding these practices, and how these practices came to prevail.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. The commissioners have power to investigate into any fraudulent conduct in respect to these acts. You could not get anything wider than that. Would it not be fraudulent conduct if there were outsiders conspiring together?

SIR CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. It might be held from the language of the commission that it referred simply to corrupt and fraudulent practices in connection with the perpetration of the act. For instance, after it had been proven what took place in the booth, the evidence might inculpate people outside the constituency who had sent in a gang of men to perpetrate these acts in the booth, and it is just possible that the judges might rule that the acts of those parties outside was not within the scope of the commission.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. Would not the persons who sent them be just as liable as the persons who went, and would not their conduct be fraudulent?

SIR CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. The Minister of Railways will understand how dangerous it is to pick out a few words in order to test a question of this kind, and therefore, I shall read the language of the commission. The empowering language of this commission says:

To inquire into and investigate any alleged fraudulent alterations—

That is one thing.