

which prompted the removal. There have been men removed, as I stated in the answer I gave in connection with the Intercolonial Railway, for having been insolent to their superior officers and for having been intoxicated while on duty. These are good reasons for dismissal. Such instances may have occurred during an election contest when party feeling runs high, but party excitement is no justification for the insolence of any official towards those who are over him. I know nothing of the telegrams to which the hon. gentleman referred. I never heard of any conversation through the telephone being used for political purposes, and if any such be brought to my notice or that of my hon. friend and colleague, the Minister of Public Works, we will give it the fullest possible consideration and punish any one who has betrayed the trust reposed in him in so responsible a position as that of a telephone or telegraph officer under the control of the Government. As to the charge made against all these officials, of being in a ring or plot, I have nothing to say, for the simple reason that I have no knowledge whatever of the kind. My whole conduct in connection with this Pelee Island business has been directed by the reasons I have given; and I can assure the hon. gentleman that if I had the same thing to do over again, I would not hesitate for one moment, under the circumstances, to repeat my action, and I tell the hon. gentleman if Mr. McCormick is found to be what some members of his own family have represented him to be—if he be as bad as they say he is, I shall take care, if I remain in the Customs Department, to have him removed. If I find, however, that the feeling is simply of a personal character, I shall not deem it my duty to recommend to my colleagues his dismissal. And it is just as well the hon. gentleman should understand that the feeling against Mr. Atkinson is just as strong, if I am to believe the petitions sent to the department demanding—for that is the manner in which the people of Pelee Island treat their officials—to have him removed, as it is against Dr. McCormick. I have no reason to think that Mr. Atkinson is unfit for that position. I believed it to be in the interests of the revenue and the Customs Department that Mr. McCormick, at the time, should be removed to another sphere of usefulness where he would be away from those personal feelings which are so strong against him, and another man put in his place. I found, however, that the personal feeling was just as strong against the person who was recommended for the position, and, under all the circumstances, I felt it was only a matter of justice to Mr. McCormick that he should be reinstated, as the other gentleman had only been temporarily named and not appointed by Order in Council. I did use, I doubt not, the word “appointed,” but, under the circumstances, had I reflected, I would not have done so. The gentleman named was placed in the position by a letter from the head of the department and not by an Order in Council, so that it rested with the head of the department to remove him in the same manner. I shall not reply to the hon. gentleman’s tirade against the officials. So far as I know, they perform their duty. If they had worked against him, I do not think I would have said they did not do their duty in that case, but that, however, is a matter of opinion. So long as the law gives Customs and other officials the right to record their votes, and they do so in an

inoffensive manner, without insulting their opponents or members belonging to the other party, I shall never interfere with them. It may be a question, as the hon. gentleman says, whether any official should be given his franchise. That is, I admit, a disputable point, and when the House decides that officials shall not vote, it will then become the duty of any Government to remove them should they violate the law in that respect. But, so long as they have the right to vote, I shall not individually find fault with them as long as they simply record their vote and exercise their franchise in a legitimate and gentlemanly way.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). That is not the complaint. The complaint is that they have taken the stump.

Mr. BOWELL. I have already told the hon. gentleman that I am not aware of that, and if the hon. gentleman lays down the principle that men in the employment of the Government should be removed for taking the stump either for or against the Government, I am inclined to think that there are a good many of his friends in the Dominion who would lose their positions. The hon. gentleman shakes his head, but human nature is the same in the Grit as it is in the Tory.

Mr. LAURIER. You should make the punishment the same on each side.

Mr. BOWELL. I have no doubt that, if the hon. gentleman were in power, and his friends were to advocate his policy, and try to keep him in office, he would keep them in their positions, and that, in his quiet and pleasant manner, he would turn out of office every one who spoke against him. That is the interpretation which I put upon his statement, because we all know the course which the hon. gentleman will take whenever he crosses the floor, which I hope he will not. The hon. member will have these papers brought down. He has made a mountain out of a very small mole-hill. I do not begrudge the hon. gentleman the feeling that he owes his election to the appointment of this man at a salary of \$200 or \$300, but, surely, if by our action we could transform the opinions of all the Conservatives in the country and lead them over to the other side, hon. gentlemen opposite should thank us for doing so. It is the first time in my many years of political life that I have heard Liberals complaining of the Government for making people their friends. I will endeavour, if I live long enough, to visit that Island, which I believe is a garden situated in the midst of a lake, in order to see that the people there are re-converted to the true faith, and that they do not vote for the hon. gentleman again.

Mr. PATERSON (Brant). We have been hearing lately of so many questionable transactions on the part of the Government that a new case, when it is brought forward, seems not to strike the House with the force it otherwise would, but I think you, Mr. Speaker, must agree with me that this is a very serious charge, and that the idea of prostituting one of the public departments so as to disarrange the public service for the purposes of an election is a charge which should receive serious attention at the hands of this House. The Minister of Customs virtually admits that my hon. friend (Mr. Allan) has presented his statement truthfully and fairly, but he says he has tried to make a