

whether the charges made by the hon. member for Champlain have been proved. We are not concerned with the question whether any employees of the Department of Marine and Fisheries in Sorel have exceeded their duty. That might form, if necessary, the basis of another inquiry by another committee; but surely the Committee on Privileges and Elections has been instituted only for the purpose of ascertaining whether members sitting in this House are duly qualified to do so. Now I regret that some newspapers in this country have seen fit to try to prejudice opinion, both in the public and in this House, without having had the privilege, as members of the committee have had, of hearing and seeing the witnesses who were being examined. They have discussed the question mostly on hearsay. But lawyers and judges know that it makes a great difference in forming a judgment whether you have the privilege of seeing the witnesses when they are examined. They seem to make a kind of hero of the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Blondin) who has made the charges. What were the charges made by the hon. member for Champlain against the hon. member for Richelieu? I shall read a part of them for the sake of my argument. He charged:

That I am credibly informed, and I believe that I can establish by satisfactory evidence:—

That in the course of the years 1908, 1909 and 1910, irregularities, abuses, frauds, malversations and robberies have been committed in the shops and stores of the government of Canada at St. Joseph de Sorel and in the city of Sorel, in the electoral district of Richelieu. . . .

That said goods—

That is the goods sent to Mr. Lanctot's house.

Were so fraudulently appropriated to, and said work so fraudulently done at the expense of the government of Canada for the benefit of the said Adelard Lanctot, then and now a member of the House as aforesaid, with his knowledge, assent and approval, the said Adelard Lanctot abusively and fraudulently profiting at the public expense and to the public detriment by his position as member of the House.

I submit that these charges have not been proved. I shall briefly review the evidence in the case. Mr. Lanctot, in 1910, at the date mentioned in the report, was building a house in Sorel. A good many people in this House know and many at Sorel knew that Mr. Lanctot's wife was very ill at Saranac lake. This was known by everybody on this side of the House especially, because we had more friendly relations with Mr. Lanctot than hon. members opposite. Being obliged to absent himself often, and having need of painters to finish his house which was ready to be painted, Mr. Lanctot went to the govern-

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ment workshops to get painters. Hon. members may laugh as they please at the idea that Mr. Lanctot could not get painters at Sorel. Every member of the committee who wants to be fair knows that it has been proved that there were only three painters in the city of Sorel who were not in the employ of the government at the time, and that two of them were unfit to fill the job and the other could not do it. Mr. Lanctot went to the workshops and tried to see Mr. Papineau and Mr. Papineau being absent, he went to Champagne whom he knew well, and asked him if he could let him have some painters to finish his work. I need not go minutely into the evidence in the case. He was answered that he could have them, and he said that if Champagne would keep the time of the men he would reimburse the government or that he would pay the men and was ready to pay them himself every week if necessary. Is it extraordinary that a man should go to an extensive workshop like that in Sorel to get workmen when he could not get them anywhere else? It is done in the great cities, in every place where there are large workshops. It is known also that these large shops employ a great number of workmen in certain seasons of the year, that they do not have so much need for these men at other seasons; they sometimes would prefer to see workmen going out and working somewhere else, but they do not want to send them away, and thus be deprived of their services when they need men. This is done every day. Hon. gentlemen opposite may say that the government ought not to do it. It may be so, but anyhow it is not extraordinary that Mr. Lanctot should have gone to those shops, the only place where he could get those workmen, and he got them. He paid them, the evidence is clear on that point; he got some material for which he also paid. Where is the proof of robbery charged by the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Blondin)? I am sorry to say that the hon. member for Champlain in making such grave charges against a colleague in this House had not the courage to offer to resign his seat if he could not prove the charges which he had made. There is probably no example in this House or in the parliament of any other country of a member making so grave a charge as that an hon. member or colleague had rendered himself guilty of robbery, of fraudulently obtaining money or merchandise under false pretenses and not having the courage to say: If I am not able to prove those charges then I will resign my seat. If the hon. member for Champlain had simply said: I hear that there are irregularities committed in the workshops of the government at Sorel and I ask that they be investigated, well and good; but he charges