

government. Therefore, I am surprised that the hon. gentleman should hesitate about an investigation. I think this is one of the most disgraceful attempts ever heard of in this country. If anything is worthy of an investigation, it is a transaction of this kind, in which, so far as the facts are before us, certain gentlemen belonging to a political party, have not only sought to violate the law which these census enumerators are sworn to preserve, but have also sought to have performed by them at the expense of the country, certain work which should be done by any political organization at its own expense. I therefore sincerely trust that the hon. gentleman will see fit to make the investigation necessary to get at the real facts of this matter, and will see that any person who has attempted to commit an act of that kind shall be brought to justice and punished so far as the laws of this country are able to punish him.

Mr. BENNETT. May I ask the hon. minister where the form of oath is to be found in the instructions?

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. I do not think the form of oath is in the instructions.

Mr. INGRAM. I would like to ask the hon. minister if the issue of Coté's circular received the endorsement of the department?

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. I would like first to reply to the leader of the opposition. The hon. gentleman must have misinterpreted what I said, if he thought that I was desirous in any way of shielding anybody or preventing an investigation. The facts were only to-day brought to my notice in the form of a newspaper article. I purpose to find out exactly what the facts are, so far as I can, and to be guided by what I find as to the future action. I am not prepared to say what that action will be until I have investigated the facts; nor am I prepared to take a newspaper article as a necessarily accurate statement of the facts. When my own departmental investigation shows me what the facts are, I shall be able to state exactly to the House what I will do in connection therewith. I do not think the committee would expect me to do more than that. I am quite prepared to say that anybody connected with the census who has contravened the law or gone beyond his instructions shall be dealt with in the way in which any man who does wrong should be dealt with. Replying to the hon. member for East Elgin (Mr. Ingram) with regard to the Coté circular, as he calls it, I may say that the letter signed by Mr. Coté and sent out, with regard to the way in which certain enumerations should be taken, meets with the approval of myself as the head of the department. I see nothing in that letter that is in any

way objectionable. It was written and issued to the enumerators for the purpose of securing an accurate enumeration of the people, and as such it meets with the approval of the department.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). I might say to the hon. gentleman that these facts were brought to the attention of the public as far back as Thursday last; and although I did not take any action in regard to the matter until Saturday, I procured one of the original circulars sent to the census enumerators, and I have it in my possession now. I might also point out that the handing of these circulars to these men was apparently done in a very insidious way, and done to deceive the public and make them believe that it was necessary for them to answer the questions there asked, because section 22 of the Census Act states that any form purporting to be an authorized form is *prima facie* evidence that it is the proper form. Apart from any such provision of the statute, a form printed in this way, with all the appearance of verisimilitude, would be apt to deceive nine out of every ten people with the idea that it was something the government was actually asking them to fill in.

* Mr. INGRAM. It is well known, I think, to all the public men in Canada, that some such movement as the issue of this circular was contemplated some months ago; and if the government believed such an idea was a good one, why did they not issue the circular in the ordinary way and take the full responsibility of it the same as any other document connected with the census? The hon. gentleman stated to-day that 744 of these circulars were sent to Ontario, 196 to New Brunswick, 287 to Prince Edward Island and 441 to British Columbia, or a total of 1,855. If these figures are correct, they only amount to 1,668, so that there is a discrepancy as to the number sent out. I have only to say that if it goes throughout the country that this assistant census commissioner issued this circular, that is one reason to my mind why such a circular as that read by the hon. member for East Simcoe (Mr. Bennett) has been circulated throughout a portion of the province of Ontario. It seems to me it is a bad way to commence the work of taking the census. The document should have been officially issued by the government. If that had been done, we would not have heard the criticism we have heard to-night. For my part, I do not think the government can be condemned too strongly. So far as the Prime Minister of Ontario is concerned, when his attention was drawn to this circular he made light of it as a very trifling affair. I can easily understand that. The Prime Minister of Ontario has so far forgotten his duty as an honourable man in conducting the affairs of the province that it would require a great

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax).