

right to express their opinions. But the question of improper interference is not to be settled in a general way; each case must rest upon its own basis. To say that a man may be driven from the public service because he has a vote, because he has an opinion and expresses that opinion—it seems to me that is a most unwarrantable and most unjustifiable trespass upon the rights of citizenship. Especially is that the case when the political question at issue is not one in which the government having control of these officials is directly concerned. There may be a reason—there might be a reason—for the government exercising an arbitrary and otherwise unjustifiable authority over its officials in the case of an election in which it was concerned. But to say that they must practically disfranchise or de-citizenise their employees in regard to all questions coming before the public, provincial, municipal or otherwise, is, it seems to me, unreasonable, improper and absurd; and, if hon. gentlemen opposite wish to take that position, I can only say that they are welcome to it and that I take issue with them upon it.

As to the Prince Albert election case which has been mentioned, I have seen many arguments in the newspapers holding the right hon. Prime Minister of this Dominion (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) directly responsible for this outrage. The argument is this: the Prime Minister was responsible for the organization of the province—the organization of the province involved the appointment of a provincial premier—elections had to be held and returning officers appointed by the provincial government of which the provincial premier was the head;—and therefore in the last analyses the Prime Minister of Canada was responsible for the stuffing of the ballot boxes in Prince Albert. It has been alleged that those concerned in this 'outrage' were employees of the Department of the Interior. So far as I was able to learn on inquiry, I find that one of these men had been in the employ of the department as a fire ranger; that is, he was subject to be called upon to work for the department during the season in looking after forest fires. He was not in the employ of the department at the time the alleged outrage took place. Another man, Sutherland, had recently been appointed Indian farm instructor, and was technically in the employ of the department. The third person concerned was not an employee of this government, and so far as I know, never had been. The leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) has suggested that it was highly improper and an evidence of partisanship that gentlemen who held a position under the government should accept the position of poll clerk or returning officer in an election took place. I take issue on that point. I do not see that the acceptance by an individual of an appointment to

Mr. OLIVER.

act as returning officer or poll clerk is evidence of partisanship. Every man knows that the returning officer, the deputy returning officer and the poll clerk are supposed, at any rate—and so far as oath of office can bind any man they are bound—to act impartially. Now, it must be known that in the outlying districts it is not always easy to secure the services of men who are competent to hold a poll. Therefore, there is nothing unreasonable or improper in the department, under the circumstances, permitting one of its officials to act as such officer. However, these men acted as they did. They were supposed to have held this poll; they did not hold it; they were discovered in their wrong doing and were brought before a court and punished as the law provides. They were brought before a magistrate's court and brought there at the instance of the aggrieved candidate. The court was of his own choosing and the punishment was awarded by that court. It was not the maximum punishment permitted by the law. I fail to see wherein the Department of the Interior or the Indian Department is in any way responsible for the action or inaction of that court. My hon. friend looked at me across the floor, and asked in horror-stricken tones, if these men were still at large. I presume they are. I hope my hon. friend does not suggest that, in addition to the somewhat numerous duties already laid upon my poor shoulders, I should act the part of constable at the far distant point of Prince Albert and restrain the liberty of those who may have trespassed upon what he may consider the rights of others.

If these men are at large I presume they have a right to be at large, and if they have not a right to be at large, then the processes of law are open to my hon. friend and to his friends to take measures to restrain their liberty. As regards the gentleman who was in the employ of the Interior Department, certainly I considered that having done as he did he was not a suitable person to remain in that employ, and he was dismissed. That, I considered, was the limit of the responsibility of my department in the matter. However, I would like to point out one peculiar thing in this connection. As I said, there were three men who went north with these ballot boxes, and three men who came back, but only two were fined. The third man was the one responsible, so far as I can learn, for proposing to hold the polls in that region; he was the man supposed to know the locality, who stated there were so many people there entitled to vote, and he was the guide of this party who were to go up and take those votes. This gentleman was not an official of the Interior Department. It would almost strike one as somewhat peculiar that, when there were three men equally guilty, two of them should be fined, and the third should be still at