

Mr. Ross—Hear, hear.

Mr. Whitney—Yes, I make my appeal even above the jeers of the Premier of Ontario.

The Opposition leader concluded by moving the following amendment:—
“The appointment of R. A. Grant, who had held professional relations with some of the men charged with the commission of offences in the West Elgin election, to be one of the legal officers to assist in the execution of the commission to examine into the conduct of the returning officer, deputy returning officers and poll clerks in the West Elgin election deserves the strong condemnation of this House.”

Attorney-General's Reply.

The Attorney-General in reply pointed out that the House had been in session for nearly five weeks, and the greater part of this time had been taken up with the discussion of the West Elgin matter. It was dragged in on every conceivable occasion, and now, when the House was trying to settle down to business, it was once more brought to the fore. He doubted whether any leader of the Opposition had shown such lack of appreciation of the proper proportion of things, or had displayed so puerile a disposition as Mr. Whitney had in connection with this matter. He did not blame the Opposition for calling attention to the irregularities, to the frauds, to the outrageous conduct of some of those who had participated in the West Elgin election, but the pertinacious way in which those on the other side had dovetailed this matter into every item of business throughout the session was not only unjustifiable, but deserving of censure. The country expected members to come there and transact business, but not to occupy four or five weeks with the discussion of one subject. The threat had been made that this was only an instalment and more was to follow. This implied that West Elgin was the whole stock-in-trade of the Opposition, and the one plank in their platform. He pitied the Opposition upon the poverty of their political policy. (Ministerial applause.) The Government had said over and over again that it did not defend the election irregularities or frauds perpetrated in West Elgin, but these matters were now sub-judice, and should be left to the judicial commission which was conducting an investigation. But the Opposition preferred to violate all rules of propriety and good taste rather than deny themselves the pleasure of reveling in these matters, and reading the affidavits of self-confessed criminals. (Ministerial cheers.)

“The leader of the Opposition,” continued the Attorney-General, “asks this House to condemn a gentleman whose character stands high and unimpeached before the public and in the community, on the strength of testimony like that. Mr. R. A. Grant was not especially appointed. His firm was expected to go and assist Mr. Watson, who was the counsel entrusted with the giving of evidence before the commission. As a matter of fact, Mr. Macdonald was expected to act, but he was not present—Mr. Macdonald had been ill and was out of the city—when the commission sat in Toronto. Mr.

Macdonald is a Queen's Counsel. I do not know whether he is a Liberal or a Conservative, but at all events he stands high in the profession, and not a word can be said against him, and the same remark can be made with reference to Mr. Grant. If in the absence of Mr. Macdonald Mr. Grant did attend the sittings of the commission, I see nothing wrong about that. It does not appear that he took any part in the conduct of the investigation; it does not appear that he examined a single witness, or asked a single question. If he had done so I do not say it would have been wrong.”

A Fact That Was Ignored.

Furthermore, the Attorney-General went on to say, when the commission began its sittings at St. Thomas, Mr. Macdonald took his place as assistant to Mr. Watson, but that fact had been ignored by Mr. Whitney. They were not so much concerned about who should act as counsel as that the investigation should be an honest and thorough investigation. It was unfair to the commissioners and to the gentlemen who were acting as counsel for the hon. gentleman to anticipate the conclusion that the officials of the commission were wanting in their duty until they had evidence to justify it. He would like to know what the hon. gentleman desired. Did he expect the Government to select some prominent Conservative counsel to appear before the tribunal? Had it been a common practice in criminal cases, and in all Government work, for the Government to select a prominent member of the Conservative party to represent it? The public did not expect this. The public expected that as counsel in cases of the kind reputable members of the bar would be selected from the party in power. The motion sought to condemn unheard, on the evidence of a self-confessed criminal, a gentleman against whose character or reputation as a lawyer no word had been said.

Mr. Whitney—I know the hon. gentleman would not wittingly misrepresent me. I did not say one word against Mr. Grant. It is the Government which we wish to condemn, not Mr. Grant.

The Attorney-General—The object of the hon. gentleman is to condemn the Government, but the reading of the amendment is a condemnation of Mr. Grant if it is anything.

Continuing, the Attorney-General said that he did not know of all the matters to which the leader of the Opposition had referred, but he did know that Mr. Grant was not even present at the St. Thomas trial when the confession of Mr. Macnish was produced. In reference to the facts disclosed, no one pretended to say one word of justification or defence. The Liberal party condemned it just as strongly as the hon. gentlemen of the Opposition, but he would tell the leader of the Opposition that the people of this country did not approve of his action in inserting “West Elgin” in every debate and every matter brought before the House. While condemning fraud in elections, the people had some sense of propriety and proportion in these matters, and already people, irrespective of party, were