

right or authority to appoint such officers be taken from the commanding officer of a regiment? Under these regulations he will never know what to do unless the regulations are of a character to invest in the commanding officer the same powers that he has now under the present law on the statutes. Suppose an officer commits an error and does that which should deprive him of his rights. He may get drunk; He may misbehave himself on parade. What does the colonel do? He orders the stripes to be taken from that man at once and he is reduced to the ranks. Why should he not have that power instead of having it done by the Minister of Militia framing a resolution? I think this is going to injure the efficiency of the militia. A commanding officer should not have this power taken from him, nor should he be restricted in any way. I have no fault to find with the provision that the government should make the appointment. That is the practice in England and in this country. But here is a material change, and I am at a loss to know what has suggested it, unless it be from the purpose of the centralizing the power in Ottawa that has been exercised by commanding officers in the past without any complaint, as far as I ever heard, by the colonels of the regiments. In other words it is taking from the commander an authority and power which he should possess, and vesting it in regulations which are to be adopted by the Minister of Militia here. I should be very glad to hear an explanation and a reason given for this change. I think it is a very bad change, to use stronger language, a change which would be detrimental to the well-being and the proper regulation and management of all companies and of the regiments. In an independent company, the captain has that power. He appoints his corporals and sergeants, and does so from the knowledge he has, and yet he could not do that unless he complies with the regulations made at Ottawa. They may be all right and they may not.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—The hon. gentleman assumes that the regulations are always to be in the most objectionable form he can conceive. He has no right to draw those inferences, and it is quite unfair.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL.

He assumes a motive in every way he can. It is not a reasonable thing. There may be some grounds for this. I am not familiar with the details of the matter, but I am quite sure that every feeling of honour and propriety and right dictates every change in this Bill. No motive has ever been suggested.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—We have heard that speech fifty times to-night. I am dealing with the principle involved, and not with the party that makes the regulation, and the hon. gentleman has no right to say that I impute motives to any person. I say it may be abused for a purpose, and after the hon. Secretary of State has driven me to it I shall say that I have no doubt it will be abused. I may be wrong in that, but the power is taken to do it. Give us a reason why it is changed? It is open to abuse, no matter who is the minister, but if there is a good reason for it, the hon. gentleman will find no one more willing to withdraw the inferences than myself. The hon. gentleman says that there is no reason to suspect that any wrong may follow from it, nor is there reason to suppose that these regulations will not be what they ought to be. There must be some reason for the change. Give us the reason, and if it is a good one, I shall withdraw all that I have said in reference to it; but to take it on the mere ipse dixit of the Secretary of State to say 'You have not right to criticise it because it is there and nothing wrong will flow from it,' that is not at all convincing.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—In the hon. gentleman's opinion, every clause is wrong.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—No, every clause is not wrong. I said there were improvements in the Bill, and the hon. gentleman is drawing upon his imagination, which he has no right to do.

Hon. Mr. LANDRY—Will the hon. gentleman tell us why that clause was changed?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—I really cannot. I am not familiar with the details of the Bill at all. I cannot pretend to be.

Hon. Mr. LANDRY—We should let the clause stand.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—The hon. gentleman criticises every clause in the Bill.