

and ardent supporter of his own will be appointed. The first qualification that a returning officer will have to possess is that he is a friend of the Administration, and I say the Government is as much disqualified for advising the Crown in this matter as a member is in a question in which he has a personal interest. The hon. gentleman has made out no case. He has not shown that any abuse exists under the law as it stands; he has not shown a single case in which a returning officer has made an improper return in which he has returned the candidate in a minority, or kept out the candidate entitled to the seat. Yet the hon. gentleman, without showing a single abuse, and without any facts to warrant it, proposes this change in the law. What should be the rule to guide the Legislature? That it should make such changes, as experience shows necessary for the removal of real abuses and grievances, is patent to everybody. The hon. member for Lambton has stated truly that the majority of the returning officers belong to the side of the Government, to which a large majority of officials in Quebec, Ontario and the other Provinces belong. But, not satisfied with that, he insists that the returning officers shall be his creatures and appointees. The present law is just and satisfactory to both parties; like the other propositions of this Bill, the present is intended to load the dice in favor of the hon. Premier and his supporters.

Mr. BOULTBEE. The hon. member for Bothwell argues that the returning officers should not be appointed for Dominion elections by the Dominion Government, because they would be subject to its influence, whereas the appointees of the Ontario Government would not be subject to its influence. If the Ontario Government was taking a proper position on this matter, his argument would be good; but they are notoriously not taking the proper position, and the chief opponents of the Conservative party in Ontario at present is the Ontario Local Government. We find its hostility everywhere. It is an open secret that as regards the questions to be brought before the country at the next elections, including the boundary question and the Streams Bill, that the Government of Ontario and the leader of the Opposition have been in consultation for hours, days and weeks, getting up a case—not trying to effect a proper settlement of these questions, but to bring them into a shape by which trouble may be caused for their political advantage. The hon. leader of the Opposition and Mr. Mowat do not want the boundary question settled, preferring it should be a leading question at the next elections. Instead of, as the hon. member for Bothwell says, returning officers who hold offices under the Ontario Government being free and unbiassed, they are the worst biassed men we have to meet, and they are acting in every shape and in every place against us. Why within the last two days, I have learned how the whole pressure of the Ontario Government is being used in East York against myself. The tavern-keepers are being told, that they shall not have their licenses if they do not pledge themselves to vote for the hon. member for Lambton instead of me; and the Division Court clerk is canvassing against me. When we find the tactics so apparent and general—when those men tell you: I cannot vote for you, although I am a Conservative, for I shall lose my license and my bread, it is seen that their action is dictated by the principles of business. And yet we have the hon. member for Bothwell declaring: We want those returning officers appointed by the Ontario Government, and under their immediate control—we want those unbiassed men left in charge of the Dominion elections. If there ever was anything necessary to preserve the liberty of election, it is that the Dominion Government should have the right to appoint men who will conduct them free from party bias, fairly and properly. It has not and cannot be alleged, at least within my memory, that any returning officer appointed by the Conservative Gov-

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ernment has acted unfairly. Such officers appointed by the Ontario Government, would, like the license inspectors at present, try to coerce the people and prevent freedom and fairness in the elections. The Commons of Canada should not be governed by the Ontario Legislature, or be subjected to its Ministerial cabals. The Dominion Government should appoint their own officers for this as for other duties.

Mr. BLAKE. The statement the hon. gentleman has just made with reference to myself and Mr. Mowat, is utterly and entirely and absolutely without foundation in fact. Mr. Mowat never consulted me on any one step of this controversy as to what he should do; he never communicated to me his intended course. I never gave him any expression of opinion as to what he should do, and was never aware of any one step he proposed to take through the whole of this controversy until the public became aware of it.

Mr. HESSON. The hon. member for Bothwell stated he had not heard of any case in which a sheriff interfered in the elections. Now, we have in Stratford, I presume, as respectable a sheriff as the Reform party are in the habit of appointing, and without finding fault with him I may give an instance of such intermeddling. We have a police magistrate in Stratford appointed by the Mowat Administration, contrary to the will of the people. We are compelled to pay him \$1,200 a year to deal out even-handed justice to all, irrespective of their politics. But the partizan sheriff selected the partizan appointee of a partizan Government, one who went no less than twenty miles to act as deputy returning officer in a division of my county where it was notorious his co-religionists were found to a large extent. It was not for the benefit of the public that he was selected, but to influence voters connected with his own church. In another case, a bailiff was selected for a scrutineer for another division, and who carried into a poor settlement a large number of judgments and executions to influence voters. We know what influence they had on the electors. With such influences as these against us, my friends and myself feel we are unfairly handicapped in the elections. When such cases as that occur, it is high time the Government should take into their hands the selecting of the returning officers.

Mr. MACKENZIE. Will the selection by the Government of a returning officer prevent a police magistrate voting if he pleases? He has as good a right to vote as the hon. gentleman.

Mr. HESSON. Does the hon. gentleman approve of the appointment of a police magistrate as a scrutineer for a returning officer? I gave you a clear case of partizanship, and by a respectable gentleman too.

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman has not made out any case. He has not shown any improper conduct on the part of any officer appointed. With reference to the observation of the hon. member for East York that the sheriff and the registrars are appointed by the Local Government, they are not appointed for this purpose. They are Dominion officers—officers of this Government, and the mere fact that they are discharging the duties of returning officers depends on the Statute which the hon. gentleman proposes to repeal. Sheriffs and registrars being permanent officers of the Local Government are no more under its control as returning officers than would be the judges in any of our courts under the control of the Government. What the hon. gentleman wants is not justice or neutrality on the part of returning officers. He wants them to be violent partizans on his own side, and is, therefore, very anxious that this Government should appoint them. We know how these men act. I have given instances of their returning candidates who were in a minority, and those candidates were enabled, through the influence of the Government, to sit here for two or three Sessions. The hon. gentleman who proposed to