

informs me that he was returned by the returning officer on 4th March, but he was not gazetted until 26th March. I think the conduct of some parties connected with the elections was so highly irregular, so partisan like, and so utterly inconsistent with everything like equality in election contests, that it is most desirable the House should enquire into the conduct of the various persons connected with the elections; and with this object I beg to move:

That the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery be ordered to attend at the Table of the House forthwith with all the papers necessary to show in each electoral district the date of the return made to the writ by the returning officer in such electoral district, the date at which such return reached his office, the date at which such return was gazetted, and all correspondence between himself and returning officers in reference to the said returns.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. The hon. gentleman says that this being a matter of privilege he can bring it up without notice. Well, perhaps he can, but, at the same time, he ought to have given notice. The rule, as generally used, is applied to matters of privilege which are of urgency—to matters which require the immediate action of the House. I do not think that there is any urgency in this matter, and, therefore, I think the hon. gentleman ought to have followed the usual practice and given the usual notice, because I do not think any man has been deprived of his seat in this House by any action, or want of action, on the part of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. We are all here, I think, in our seats in this House; if there has been any irregularity it can be brought before this House—if it comes within the competency of this House—or it can be rectified through other tribunals, if they are the proper tribunals, and the persons can be punished, so that I think the hon. gentleman ought to have given notice. The hon. gentleman is not in a very good temper. He has been abusing the returning officers, the revising officers, the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, the Government, and everybody else. Well, I am not surprised at his being a little out of temper, because if there ever was a disappointed body of men in the world, if there ever was a body of men who thought they had got us at last, a body of men who were deceived as to the feeling of the public with regard to them, it is hon. gentlemen opposite; and I take it that no one of them was more disappointed at being relegated for—I do not say how many years—to the cool atmosphere which he is now occupying, it is my hon. friend from Bothwell. And so it was necessary to abuse everybody. As I have said before on one occasion, when the sailor is tied up to the gangway and is receiving the lash, he is allowed to use what language he likes to the captain. He can abuse him as much as he likes in consideration of his taking the lash. The hon. gentleman is not taking the lash here, but he took it with his political friends at the hands of that potent master—the great electorate of the Dominion of Canada. The returning officers, the hon. gentleman says, are partisans. Well, they are partisan because they returned us on this side; the revising officers have hounded the lists, because there was not a strong enough body in the various lists in the Dominion of Canada to change the minority of last Parliament into a majority in this Parliament. Therefore, we can quite understand the attacks and the want of the usual amenity of the hon. gentleman, in his speech on this occasion. But the hon. gentleman says there was a great abuse in our altering the law; that before the law was altered the sheriffs and registrars were the officials, that they were responsible men, holding high offices, and that, therefore, they were the right men to be returning officers. Well, they were responsible men, certainly, but not responsible to this House, nor to the Government of the Dominion. He states that in England the sheriffs were usually returning officers, and that they were not appointed by the Crown. Yes; but they were not appointed by any hostile bodies—hostile to the

Government of the day. They were picked in the usual way by the old and well-known process—the sheriff of the county was selected and he and certain other persons were the returning officers. The hon. gentleman says that before the alteration was made there was no complaint. I deny that altogether. I say that when the sheriffs and registrars were the returning officers, responsible to the Provincial Governments, there was no security for any member—I do not care on which side—if the Provincial Government happened to be of opposite politics to a particular candidate. I have no hesitation to say that there has been a most hostile spirit shown, especially in the Province of Ontario, and I believe also in the Province of Nova Scotia—a most hostile spirit to the Government, who are Her Majesty's advisers, sitting on this side. I say it has always been so, and never more so than during the late elections. I say that the hostility of the Provincial Governments was marked, that every individual composing the Provincial Governments worked as he never worked before, in order to defeat the Administration. I say that it was as much as the office of either a registrar or a sheriff was worth in the Province of Ontario if, being a returning officer, the incumbent of that office dared to be impartial. I say that the most open threats were made by every member of the Administration in the Province of Ontario against their officials—that they were threatened openly and boldly, if they did not work locally for the Provincial Government, and, in the Dominion elections, against the Conservative party. It was notorious that it was so, from the Premier down to the bailiffs of the Division Courts and the license inspectors and commissioners. I know how that was—that a Conservative licensed victualler could not get his license, or was threatened with the loss of it, unless he voted against the present Government. It was a matter of self-protection that we altered the law and took away from the hostile Provincial Governments the right of selecting the returning officer who was of necessity, for fear of losing his office, bound to act against us. If we appointed the returning officers, it was from the necessity of the case. The Dominion Government are responsible to Parliament for the propriety of their appointments of returning officers, as of all other officers; but the Dominion Parliament have no control whatever over the provincial officers, who have acted with such glaring impropriety that no defence for them could possibly be offered. I say, also, that the returning officers in the last elections were a body of respectable men. I believe they have performed their duties impartially, and if they have not performed those duties there is a recognised tribunal fixed by law to punish them and to report to this House the misconduct of any returning officer—aye, and of any revising officer—who has committed any breach of his duty. If the hon. gentleman will alter the word “forthwith” to “to-morrow,” I have no objection to bringing down the papers. I have only this to say, that I do not see what difference it makes whether an hon. member is gazetted first or last.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I do not see any difference.

Mr. MILLS. How came the hon. gentleman and all his colleagues to be gazetted first?

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. No matter whether it is first or last, the parties opposed to the return had thirty days to petition against the member, and if he is last in the *Gazette* there are still those thirty days. The hon. gentleman says I was gazetted early. I was gazetted first, I think, for Carleton—

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. No, for Kingston.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Well, I have a petition against me there. I was not in any way protected by being