

officers. The experience in this House in regard to the conduct of returning officers at elections has not been bad; it has been good. Personally I have never heard of misconduct by a returning officer; I have heard of it in the Ontario elections where they have another system. I think in a number of the provinces they appoint sheriffs, registrars and other public officials. Now, there is something to be said in favour of that system.

Mr. POWER: Will the hon. gentleman permit me a question? Is it not a fact that under the proposed Act the judges appoint the revising officers?

Mr. GUTHRIE: The judges are the revising officers, and they may appoint such fit and suitable additional revising officers as may be necessary in any particular locality.

Mr. POWER: What is the difference between the appointment of a revising officer and the appointment of a returning officer?

Mr. GUTHRIE: A revising officer is in the nature of a judge. Let me point this out to my hon. friend. For the city of Quebec and the city of Montreal there is a registrar, and any one dissatisfied with his action may appeal to a judge, who is the Chief Justice of the Superior Court of that district. Now, it is not to be supposed that in a riding like West Quebec one Appellate judge can do all the work. He might be able to attend to it, but I doubt it very much, and in case he can not, he has the same power as a High Court judge of Ontario to call in a County Court judge.

Mr. POWER: Not necessarily a barrister or—

Mr. GUTHRIE: No. If my hon. friend considers that such a provision should be inserted in this Bill, personally I see no objection to it; if such a qualification is desired I think it might well go in. But if we recognize that the judges are the proper body to decide these matters, and we have more appeals than we have judges, who should appoint others to help them? Remember, they occupy judicial positions. I think the best provision is that made by the Bill which allows the judges to make additional appointments.

Now, in regard to the system of appointment of public officers, I am going to discuss it from the standpoint of Ontario, because for a long time there the law provided that sheriffs and registrars should be the returning officers. At this distance

[Mr. Guthrie.]

of time we might as well be candid and admit that that was a good, safe and satisfactory law for the old Liberal Governments of that province. Why, it was really committing the duties of returning officers to their best friends—they must have been good friends or they would never have got those positions. Not only that, but they were officials who could be removed by the Government at any time. There was therefore a double objection to that system. As far back as my memory goes the first sheriff I remember in the county of Wellington was the Hon. Peter Gow, at one time provincial secretary in the Government of Sir Oliver Mowat. He later became sheriff. Well, it was quite safe to trust the duties of returning officer to that man. When he died, he was followed by the late Robert McKim, who was the sitting member of the Legislature supporting the Government; the Government could quite safely trust the affairs of an election to Sheriff McKim. When Robert McKim died he was followed by the present incumbent, Sheriff Allan, also sitting member of the Legislature and supporter of the Liberal administration; it was quite safe to appoint him returning officer. Then, take the matter of registrar. The earliest date to which my memory takes me is the time when this appointment went to James Massie, sitting member for South Wellington, a supporter of the Government. When he died, Colonel Higginbotham was appointed, for many years a Liberal member of this House, supporting the Liberal Opposition. When he died, Henry Hortop was appointed; he was not a sitting member, but had been a candidate in the local election. All of these men were of the highest character and standing in the community, but they were all political partisans prior to their appointment. So that throughout the whole length and breadth of Ontario I do not know that there have been more than five or six sheriffs and registrars who were not appointees of the late Liberal Government; in 1905, when it went out of office, in fact, the majority of them had sat in the Legislature of Ontario as supporters of the Government. Now, do you think that is a good system? The only outstanding case of electoral irregularity that I know of was the case of West Elgin, where the sheriff had been appointed returning officer. There may have been others, but that is the only one I can recall at the moment. I have never in my experience heard of a single instance where electoral corruption has been charged against the returning officer in my district. For these reasons, and be-