

Dismissal of Returning Officer

Mr. MacNicol: That is what it says in the inscription above the fireplace in the Senate library.

If I am here next time I will fight like a tiger to have the polls taken out of the hands of politics altogether. Why can we not adopt the English plan or the Australian or the New Zealand plan? Why cannot we remove these things far away from political temptation, as seems the case at the present time?

I have warm feelings for the minister. I knew his father, and I was sorry to see him get into this mess. Perhaps this same mess was engineered and organized by some other people, but he should have stayed out of it. He would have shown much better judgment to have stayed out of it. I have still a good opinion of him, but not as good as I did have, because he has yielded to this pressure to throw out a member of his own party who has served his country well.

I come back to the point from which I commenced. A report was handed to the hon. member for Grenville-Dundas (Mr. Casselman). The answer to question 4 is not complete; a good deal has been left out of it. This return is dated March 21, 1949, only eight days ago. It does not mention Davenport riding at all—and others. In addition to the riding of Davenport there are others it does not mention. Why are not these others set out in this list? I should not think the minister would try to conceal it from me or from the hon. member for Grenville-Dundas. I should not think he would do that.

This is bad business; this kind of thing, I say, is bad business. Politics should be above all that. After those delightful speeches we heard yesterday in this chamber from the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), from my own leader, (Mr. Drew), from the leaders of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Social Credit party, I think we must agree that politics should be above this sort of thing. Those were outstanding speeches—and it is not for me to praise one any more than another. But that is the way we should be acting around the ballot boxes. I say the ballot boxes and the voting places should be above politics.

I am going to close with this—and this is all I shall say about it now: I demand that the minister tell—or, if he has the correspondence, that he should table such correspondence—the names of those who threw this good man out. I talked this morning by telephone with a number of officers of the Liberal association in Davenport riding, and I believe that some of them wired the minister protesting about what had been done. I do know that a former president of that organization wrote a letter—I saw it myself—protesting against any change. I do

[Mr. Graydon.]

know the minister has been pressed not to do this thing. Why did he do it?

I want the names of those people. I am the member for that riding. I was elected in it by a large majority. I have been here nineteen years. The people must know my record and my credit. I want to know the names of those people responsible for throwing out this most worthy man. You would not have done it if you had known him as I know him. And if you fail to give that information to me, I will ask in the best way I can that this be dealt with and turned over to the committee on privileges and elections, of which I am a member. I will see to it that these folks are subpoenaed, and that they are brought down here. We will find out who is responsible for all this skuldugery.

Hon. Colin Gibson (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words in reply. I must say that I think this is the first time I have ever heard a Liberal administration accused of political partisanship because of the removal of a Liberal from office.

Mr. Fraser: You must have had your earmuffs on.

Mr. Gibson (Hamilton West): I say I have never heard the government accused of partisanship because of the removal of a Liberal from office.

A short time ago I tabled in the house a list of various returning officers who had been replaced between January 1, 1946, and March 18, 1949. On that list there were sixty-two who had been replaced. Most of these retirements had been caused either through resignation because of having reached the age limit, because of death or through having left the electoral district.

The hon. member has said that he does not know the age of this returning officer. As the hon. member knows him well, I think he must have a fairly good idea of what his age is. I found on going over the file that it was claimed as far back as 1940 that he was over-age. I want to say that there is no stigma attached to any man who is replaced because he is over-age. This was no reflection on his previous service, but is the reason why he was retired and he was only one of a great many of the same age who were retired after having passed sixty-five years of age. There was no reflection on their previous service in any case.

Mr. Cruickshank: Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Golding): If the hon. member for Fraser Valley is going to speak on the same subject covered by the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. MacNicol) he would be in order to speak now, but the next speaker on the list is the hon. member