

friend will not be in any better position if the council are taken, in the first place, upon the principle, and they choose their assessors. What better would it be if this suggestion is carried out? I think it would be very much better, and we will get rid of some portions of these partisan struggles, and it will be in the interests of the country if we could have gentlemen appointed by the Government for this purpose, gentlemen who have reputations, and who are responsible to this House. I do not think any gentleman would value his position so low that he would be willing to place it in the hands of his party, and say: I will sacrifice my reputation for the paltry pittance you give me as a salary to discharge that work. I think it is asking too much of the members of this House to believe that we should get rid of the political principle by still leaving the appointment in the hands of the electors. My hon. friend must know that has been the trouble in the past.

Mr. MILLS. No.

Mr. HESSON. You may dissent from me, but I think there are very few gentlemen who are conscientious in this matter, who will not admit that I am correct. The court of revision is chosen in that way by a majority of the council, and in each township, and each city, town and county, the councillors have been for years elected upon their political principles rather than upon their qualifications as citizens. The hon. gentleman has taken an interest in these matters as well as myself. I believe in meeting it squarely and honestly. I think we can get rid of much of this discord, and that we should have better men, men of high character, placed in the position. In my own county this change will not prove of any advantage to me. In the town, not only is there a Conservative majority in the council, but there are also Conservative assessors. In other municipalities it is the same. A change will therefore be of no benefit to myself; but I feel that each will have to make some sacrifice, and that we should select officers of character and capacity for the position.

Mr. VAIL. The point is to obtain the best means of finding the value of property, in order to give people their right to vote. Three men, appointed by the municipal council, all sworn to make a correct assessment, are much more likely to arrive at a correct value than revising officers or county court judges, or anyone else who resides in only one portion of the county. Such is our experience in Nova Scotia. I was surprised to hear that in Ontario matters are not conducted as they should be—first, in the appointment of the officials, and second, in making the assessment—because I always thought that Ontario was a model Province. In my constituency the assessment has been prepared by the same officers for very many years; and I never look at the lists, until a few days before the election, because everyone is perfectly satisfied that they will be perfectly correct. I do not believe the proposed change will prove satisfactory; and in my opinion the Government will realise that they have made a mistake in appointing revising barristers to place a value on property of which they know nothing.

Mr. MILLS. The committee must regret the condition of things prevailing in North Perth—that there is a regular struggle over the municipal elections to decide which party shall control the voters' lists, that the assessments are made with a special reference to that point, and not with respect to the valuation of the property. The hon. member would lead us to believe that his friends have been eminently successful as to these points, and that his success at the polls was due to that cause. The hon. gentleman has in effect told us that those men whom the people themselves elect are utterly unfit for the duties they are appointed to discharge. How comes it, then, that the same people who

Mr. HESSON.

elect those incompetent men elected so competent a representative as the hon. gentleman? Is it not a very extraordinary circumstance? The hon. gentleman has told us that the people are not to be trusted, that they are utterly incapable of doing this work, and that it must be taken out of their hands and placed in the hands of Government officers.

Mr. HESSON. It is certainly a most remarkable fact that although, as the hon. gentleman says, I am sent here under the present system of voters' lists and elections, I am willing to support a measure that is going to change it. The hon. member is not straightforward or he would admit that he has fought this matter in his own county in order to secure not only the council, but the revisers and the assessors, so that he might control the voters' lists. If that system has sent me here, why should I be willing to change it? Because I believe we should get rid of it, and if the hon. gentleman possessed half the independence that he professes, he would take the same grounds, and unite with me in endeavoring to secure better men for the positions.

Mr. WATSON. I think the hon. member for North Perth (Mr. Hesson) is quite consistent. The hon. gentleman explained that he thought it was perfectly regular and proper to appoint assessors, and so on. The hon. gentleman now goes on to state that he is in favor of the present proposition to have revising barristers appointed. Under such an arrangement he would no longer have to fight. I think that is one of the strongest arguments, showing that they cannot always depend on having those who are strong party men. I think there are no assessors but who try to do their duties, as they are sworn officials, and besides, they have to look to their billet. They do not know whether the council next year will be Reform or Tory, and it is to their interest to do what is fair between man and man. I am surprised at hon. gentlemen imputing such actions to the assessors of Ontario. In Manitoba we find that they do their duty, and the system of making up the list there is very satisfactory—in fact, nothing could be fairer. If hon. gentlemen do not see fit to adopt the amendment of my hon. friend from Brome, and I think the suggestion of the hon. member for Bothwell would be a fair one, as if three men were elected there would always be a certainty of both parties being represented, I do not think it would be fair to leave it to a revising barrister, though I have a good deal of confidence in county judges. I think, perhaps, that is the reason that the hon. member for Perth supports the provisions of this Bill. He is afraid there might be a fight in Stratford, and that under the assessor he might not be certain to be elected.

Mr. AUGER. I rise to protest against the insult thrown against the farmers of the country by the hon. member for North Perth. He says they must appoint revising officers, and that the reason is that they have a reputation to maintain. Have not the farmers of the country a reputation to maintain, one which is worth that of the lawyers of the country? The insult is thrown at the farmers of every county of the Dominion, as in each county there must be at least thirty men appointed as assessors, who, by the way the hon. member for North Perth spoke, have no reputation or character to maintain. I just rose to protest against the insult thrown against the farmers of Canada, who will remember it.

Mr. PLATT. It is evident, from all that has been said by the hon. member for North Perth, the hon. Minister of Customs and others, in defense of the provisions of the measure, that they have simply been true to their traditions and instincts, in maintaining that the people of the country are not competent, or capable, of managing their own affairs. The Minister of Customs told us that if there was one thing