

Governor General was taken away, and it was provided that the writ should issue to the sheriff or registrar of deeds for the electoral district or a portion of it. The Governor General had accordingly power to choose the returning officer at his discretion only in a district in which there was no sheriff or registrar or the incumbents of these officers were disqualified or unable to act. The position in Canada was thus assimilated to that which then existed and has ever since existed in Great Britain, where the returning officer is always, *ex officio* the sheriff, the mayor or the chairman of the local municipal council. This new rule, however, continued in force in Canada only for eighteen years. In 1892, by 45 Vict. c. 3, s. 6, the Governor General was again given a discretion, whenever an election was required to be held in any electoral district, to select such person to act as returning officer as he thought fit, and this discretion he has continued ever since to exercise. If the change made in 1892 was not due to the redistribution of that year, that and successive redistributions have afforded grounds both for the grant and the persistence of the discretionary power.

Until, in 1925, the law was amended in the way to be later mentioned, this power fell to be exercised only on the occasion of the issue of the writ for an election, and it was accordingly inevitable, even apart from the fact that the returning officer had a casting vote in case of a tie, that appointments should, as a general rule, be made from among the political supporters of the Government of the day; in practice each returning officer no doubt was chosen usually on the recommendation of the person or persons by whom the local party patronage was controlled. Though there were exceptions to this general rule, particularly when officers appointed by the provincial government such as sheriffs or registrars were available to act and were willing to undertake the returning officer's duties, these were not numerous, and a secondary but very natural consequence of the established practice was that the returning officers selected their deputy returning officers from among their political friends, the names being no doubt often supplied from the same source as that from which the recommendation for the returning officer's own appointment had emanated. Again the general rule was subject to exceptions: in some electoral districts there grew up the practice of selecting half the deputies from each political party, this exceptional practice being no doubt usually confined to those electoral districts in which the returning officership itself was not looked upon as a party appointment. In most electoral districts, however, the political party in power had exclusive administrative control of the election.

In 1920 by 10-11 Geo. V. c. 46, a comprehensive Dominion-wide qualification for voters at federal elections was established and a new and somewhat complicated procedure was laid down for the preparation of Dominion lists in the interval between the issue of the writ of an election and the poll. A new duty in respect of the preparation of lists was thus imposed upon returning officers and without unduly prolonging the election campaign, little time could be allowed for the several steps in the procedure which had, therefore, to be taken under great pressure. In order so far as possible to ensure the efficient performance of this new work and the proper conduct of the poll, provision was made for the instruction of election officers by a Chief Electoral Officer, who was made responsible to Parliament instead of to the Government of the day. He was required to exercise "general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of elections", with a view to ensuring both compliance with the provisions of the law and "the fairness and