

and the common expression that used to be made use of by the hon. leader of the Opposition and his friends, in speaking of that late hon. gentleman and the leader of this Government was that they were in the habit of hunting in couples, and that was denounced by them as a great public wrong. Now, we learn that although the hon. gentleman denounced them at that time, and declared when he came into office in Ontario that he was thereafter to adopt a different principle, a principle of entire neutrality, he now asks us to believe that when he said that he did not in the slightest degree desire to restrict the independent action of members of either Government as citizens of the different Provinces of the Dominion in connection with the elections of either the Local or the Dominion Legislatures. The hon. gentleman forgets that the late Hon. Sandfield Macdonald was a member of this House—that he stood in precisely the same position the hon. gentleman stood in. He forgets that the moment the late Government of this Dominion came in, the hunting in couples went on between Mr. Mowat and Mr. Mackenzie. The position was precisely the same as it had been during the time the late Hon. Sandfield Macdonald was in office, and the present First Minister was First Minister of Canada. Nay, more than that, this very evening we have had from the senior member for Halifax (Mr. Jones) an attack on two members of this Government who happened to be electors in the Province of Nova Scotia, because they ventured to take any part there in the election for the Local Legislature. Why does the hon. gentleman now lay down the principle that he has a right as an independent citizen of the Province of Ontario to take what interest he pleases in the Local elections there, while his joint leader from the Province of Nova Scotia, the member of the syndicate who has been appointed to lead the Opposition with the hon. gentleman, denounces members of this Government who happened to be electors, and prominent public men in Nova Scotia, for taking part in the elections of that Province? I think, Sir, the hon. gentleman, with all the skill he undoubtedly possesses, has utterly failed to explain how he could for four years denounce as a wrong against public and political morality, the joint action in public affairs of the leader of any Provincial Government and the leader of the Dominion Government who happened to think alike on political questions, and at the same time show that he was justified, as an independent member of this House and an independent citizen of the Province of Ontario, in taking an active part in the elections there. Then, Sir, the hon. gentleman dealt with the general question, and that is the real question we have before us to-night. As to the appointment of returning officers, he laid down the principle that we ought, as a matter of duty and a matter of right, to appoint sheriffs and registrars as returning officers in Dominion elections. Well, that was not always the opinion of hon. gentlemen opposite. If I remember rightly, they actually violated the law on one occasion in order to appoint a partisan returning officer. We know what occurred in the courts of the country. The records are there. We remember the somewhat famous Jacques Cartier election. We know that the returning officer in that election was not the official named in the statute, and he was appointed by the Government of which the hon. gentleman was, either then or before, a member—because he was so frequently in and out of that Government that one cannot say for certain whether he was in or out at that time. I do not for a moment say that the results which followed that appointment were due to it. I do not say that that remarkable effort to steal an election, which was commonly known as the Ste. Anne's cupboard or ballot box scheme, was a consequence of that appointment; but I do say, that gentlemen who violated the law to appoint a returning officer, who was not the official that the law said should be appointed, do not stand very well in telling

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell).

us here that a wrong has been done when the law has been followed in appointing gentlemen other than those officials as returning officers. But what is the position the hon. gentleman takes? He says we ought not to appoint partisans as returning officers, and he was prepared to read a list of persons who, I suppose, he was prepared to show were active partisans of the Conservative party. Well, Sir, suppose we adopted the other principle, what would be the result? I can imagine a case like this: A prominent member of Parliament happens to be defeated at an election, and his friends are very anxious to have him back in Parliament. His friends happen to control the Government of one of the Provinces. There is a member sitting in this House whose seat would be a very safe one for this gentleman who had been expelled by the verdict of the constituency he should have represented. The Local Government purchase the seat of the member by granting him an office of sheriff in order to provide a seat here for the prominent member of their party. Immediately an election occurs, and this Government have to appoint this impartial person, this man without politics, as returning officer, because, forsooth, he has sold himself for a shrievalty in order to make room for an opponent of the Government. The Government are to appoint him in order to avoid the evil that might result from appointing a partisan. Why, Sir, everyone knows that these sheriffs and registrars are appointed because they are friends of the party that appoints them. Everyone knows that they are appointed because of active political services for the party that appoints them.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Even in Ottawa.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). Yes, even in Ottawa such things occur, and occur under very peculiar circumstances. Take, for instance, such a case as we have recently had, where a vacancy occurs in a registrarship, where it is kept open for more than a year, during which time there are a dozen applicants, all men who have strong claims for a position of that kind. But it happens that one particular partisan who would never be thought of but for his partisanship or for the partisanship he can bring to bear in favor of his appointment—he happens to have relatives who can do some service to the party—has to be provided for. The office is allowed to remain vacant until the Local elections are through, and when the last election is over and all the service is rendered that can be rendered by this non-partisan, he is immediately appointed to the registrarship. Then, because he becomes an impartial man by virtue of his having been made registrar, he is to be appointed returning officer. The injustice of the system is evident. On the other hand, the policy we have adopted is the best, for this reason, the Government returning officer is subject to the scrutiny of the courts. If we look at the elections through which we have just passed, I venture the opinion, despite what hon. gentlemen opposite have said, that few cases of complaint have occurred in the conduct of them as have occurred at any previous elections since 1867. Where are the complaints with regard to the conduct of returning officers? We have one which is under discussion. We may deal with it here, the courts may deal with it hereafter, but it is a case where the conduct of the returning officer is subject to the review of the court. More than that, the Government in the appointment of returning officers is subject to the control and censure of Parliament itself. The pretence that we will have less partisan men by the appointment of provincial officers is simply a pretence, as hon. gentlemen opposite know very well. Let me say one word more. This is a motion to bring a respected officer of Parliament before the bar of the House. He is asked to bring down papers to be submitted to the House. These papers, it is presumed, will give us the information on which a judgment can be formed; yet we have had hon. gentlemen opposite, one after the other, assuming, before the papers are brought