

returning officer who served in the last election who was not a political friend of the government. He cannot name one. They are all partisans appointed—

Mr. FISHER. There is one in my county, Mr. Nelson Emmerson, deputy returning officer in North Sutton, who is a well known Conservative.

Mr. FIELDING. I do not pretend to recall the names now, but, if a little time were given me, I am sure I could name fifty in Nova Scotia.

Mr. BLAIN. In the discussion the other day the Minister of Finance stated that, in his opinion, 95 per cent of the deputy returning officers appointed belonged to one political party—

Mr. FIELDING. I did not say that.

Mr. BLAIN. The hon. gentleman endorsed the position that I took in making that statement to the House.

Mr. FIELDING. The hon. gentleman is mistaken; I did not say that.

Mr. FISHER. I think the hon. gentleman is attributing to the Finance Minister (Mr. Fielding) his recollection of something that I said.

Mr. BLAIN. Then, we have it from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Fisher). But may I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) if he does not think that 95 per cent of the deputy returning officers in the federal election were of the same stripe of politics?

Mr. FIELDING. In Nova Scotia, emphatically, it is not so.

Mr. BLAIN. What percentage, then?

Mr. FIELDING. I do not know. In the county of Halifax, which I represented for some years, and I think the same is true of my present constituency, the practice was to appoint gentlemen on both sides of politics. I think that the position taken by the sheriff of the county of Halifax, a gentleman whom I had the honour to appoint, invariably appointed men irrespective of party. And I am confident that the same was true of Nova Scotia generally. I do not speak of the other provinces. We have little or no complaint with us about the deputy returning officers.

Mr. BLAIN. The sheriff is appointed returning officer, and one would gather from what the hon. gentleman says that the sheriff makes the appointments. But it is well known that the deputy returning officers are appointed on the recommendation of the candidate.

Mr. JOHNSTON. That is by your crowd.

Mr. FIELDING. In my own province it is not so. I do not recommend or make nominations of deputy returning officers.

Mr. JOHNSTON. My hon. friend has reference to what transpired in Ottawa lately. At one o'clock, committee took recess.

Committee resumed at three o'clock.

Mr. BLAIN. In regard to clause 41, I wish to add a few words to what I said before one o'clock. I think that on due consideration the minister will feel that he made a mistake if he allows this Bill to go through with the permission to civil servants to accept positions as deputy returning officers in political elections. I have under my hand several cases with reference to the deputy returning officers taking part in certain elections in the province of Ontario. If my hon. friend will read the history of provincial elections in the province of Ontario, he will come to the conclusion that at this time, when he is trying to reform the civil service, he should add a clause to this Bill that will prohibit civil servants from acting as deputy returning officers. We have had a case in the province of Ontario where a deputy returning officer, at the close of the poll, took the ballot box to his house and kept it there over night, and that ballot box was opened in his house and the ballots tampered with. When the election trial came on they made an effort to subpoena the deputy returning officer to give evidence in that trial, and he could not be found, he had gone to the United States, and I am not sure that he has returned to his home yet. That was in the county of North Grey. I have under my hand a statement showing that a returning officer appointed a deputy in an election in the province of Ontario, who did not reside in Canada at all, he came in and gave another name.

Mr. FISHER. Was he a civil servant?

Mr. BLAIN. No, he was not, but I am pointing out that under this condition of things the people of Ontario are naturally suspicious of the conduct of deputy returning officers. I am not going into the question very fully, because this is not an opportune time. But I wish to say to my hon. friend, and to say it with all possible emphasis, that when he is endeavouring to frame a Bill that will receive the approval of both sides of this House, he should endeavour to remove the civil service entirely from political partisanship, and to that end he should insert a clause providing that no civil servant shall accept the position of deputy returning officer in any political election. If my hon. friend permits this Bill to go through without such a clause as that, it will not receive the respect that he wishes it to receive, because it will be open to some suspicion, and he himself will be open to suspicion if he allows this Bill to go through without a provision of that kind.

Mr. FISHER. I hold that the position of deputy returning officer is not a partisan