

officers in one direction, there might be a bias influencing another officer elsewhere in the opposite direction. The possibility of bias being exercised on both sides had thus a tendency to prevent any such bias being exhibited, in most cases. Now, at the present time, the Ministers advise the appointments of returning officers. These officers are creatures of the Government, and it is, therefore, all the more necessary that those who are in opposition to the Government should watch with attention the conduct of these officers; it is all the more necessary that the gentlemen who are elected on the Opposition side should insist upon the law as it stands, being strictly obeyed, for their own protection. I know that the hon. First Minister, when I first moved for this return, was disposed to question my statement that the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, or any of the returning officers, had been guilty of dereliction of duty. Now, I will just mention that in my own case the returning officer delayed the return for eight days, and after it was received the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery delayed the gazetting of that return for twenty-three days, so that, in fact, the time within which it was possible to petition against my return, was extended thirty-one days beyond the time fixed by the law, if the law itself had been obeyed. Now, I say that it never was intended, the law never contemplated, that the members of the House should stand in this respect upon a footing of inequality, that it should be in the power of the Government, or of its friends, to contest elections on this side of the House, in a large number of cases, after the time had gone by, or after it was possible to file petitions against hon. gentlemen on that side of the House. The law with regard to corrupt practices fixes and limits the period within which petitions may be filed. It does so for a purpose. The law does not expect in the conduct of an official, any more than in any other case, an ideal perfectability. It seeks to discourage corrupt practices. It assumes that if corrupt practices exist, they will, to some extent, be notorious; and therefore it provides that if action is taken it must be taken within a certain limited period of time. It is not intended vindictively to pursue a member because here or there a wrong may be done, or the law may have been departed from or disregarded by some over-zealous supporter, as long as the general results of the elections have not been affected by what has been done. But if it is in the power of any officer indefinitely to protract that period of time within which action may be taken, by refraining from returning the candidate, or by withholding his name from the *Gazette*, then it is possible for him to prolong the time, to enter into minute enquiry with a view of hunting up evidence which may be technically sufficient to unseat the member. It may be that he has time to take all the necessary steps to enable him to file a petition, and thus on account of the improper conduct on the part of the officers who are not officers of the Administration, though appointed by the Administration, the members on both sides of the House may stand in a wholly different position. That was not the intention of the law. Then the First Minister said: "There was no disadvantage in having your name omitted from the *Gazette* for an indefinite period of time; on the contrary, it was rather an advantage to a public man to get time for the feeling that was evoked during the election excitement to cool down, and the probability was that petitions in those cases would be abandoned." It is very extraordinary that the position of the Government is altogether against such a notion—I had almost said the conduct of the Government, for I can scarcely believe that the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery adopted the course he did without consultation with or any advice from any member of the Administration, and I am more confirmed in this view by the actual position of the First Minister himself, with respect to this matter, not only by what was done, but by what was omitted to be done, not only by the promptness with which

the law was obeyed in one instance, but by the fact that it was slightly disregarded in another. I find that the First Minister was returned for Kingston on March 4th; he was gazetted on March 5th. I am assuming in these particulars that the statement brought down to the House by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery is correct. I find that the Minister of Militia was returned on the 11th and gazetted on the 12th. The Minister of Finance was returned on the 11th—or his return was received by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery on the 11th—and he was gazetted on the 12th. The Minister of Agriculture was returned on the 9th and gazetted on the 12th. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries, the Minister of Justice and the Postmaster General were severally returned on the 8th and gazetted on the 12th. The Minister of Railways and the Minister of Interior were returned on the 9th and gazetted on the 12th. The Minister of Public Works was returned on the 5th and gazetted on the 12th. The Minister of Customs was returned on 16th and gazetted on 19th. The Secretary of State was gazetted the same week he was returned. So that there is not a gentleman sitting on the Treasury benches who was not gazetted within the week in which he was returned, such being according to the provisions of the law. Now, the First Minister and his colleagues certainly exhibited very extraordinary courage if it be true that the danger of being petitioned against was increased on account of the promptness with which they were gazetted. But even if this were the case, in their case the law was but complied with. The law says that it is the duty of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, on receipt of the return to gazette the member as returned. But the qualifying words are "in the next ordinary issue of the *Gazette*." But, apart from those words, the construction is immediate action. I find the First Minister was returned for a second constituency. He was thus returned on 4th March, just as he was for Kingston on that date. Somehow or other in that case the gazetting of the right hon. gentleman was delayed until 12th March; that is to say, one *Gazette* was omitted, and instead of having his election entered in the next *Gazette* it did not appear until the week following. I suppose every hon. gentleman knows something of the party divisions in the county of Carleton, and are aware that the hon. gentleman's party is overwhelmingly strong in that constituency, I do not know, but I suppose, the hon. gentlemen did not even hold a meeting in that constituency after the issue of the writ, that he did not feel much in danger of being unseated, and that there was not much danger of his being petitioned against even though the law was disregarded in a single instance by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. So that when the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery received his instructions, if he had such instructions, to disregard so far as regards hon. gentlemen on this side, there was some advantage in his being able to say that in even one instance, and that of the First Minister, the gazetting was delayed for a single week. So we find the First Minister the only member of the Cabinet who was elected to a second seat in this House, and that the announcement of his return for Carleton was omitted from the *Gazette* a single week. That fact goes to confirm the impression which the fact has made upon my mind, and I think will make upon the minds of hon. members, that the Government were not altogether ignorant of what was being done by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. I am inclined to think that if the Secretary of State and hon. gentlemen opposite had had the frankness to answer the question which I put to them a few days ago, perhaps the Secretary of State would have been able to tell us how it was that over a hundred members on that side were gazetted as the law directs, and that, out of ninety and over on this side, only fifteen were gazetted as required by law. We would be able to know why the law was in this respect so flagrantly disregarded, that the deliberation and design manifested, about which