

versal opinion expressed, not only by lawyers, but by the public as well, and I do not think my hon. friend will controvert it; and I think he was not serious in these insinuations. His whole criticism was good natured, and I think he was jesting when he made those remarks, and that he did not seriously accuse the revising officers of the Dominion of tampering with the lists for the purpose of favouring the Government. I do not believe myself that they did, and I do not believe that the country think they did, and in that position I feel myself perfectly strong. But he says we fixed the elections when we pleased; we named the returning officers, and he complains that we did not fix all these bye-elections on one day. I think that my hon. friend will find that the returning officers are generally the same men who performed the same duties in former general elections. If they had been guilty of any wrong-doing there are a great many watchful eyes fixed upon them, and we should be sure to hear of it. I think the returning officers have been singularly free from any charge bearing any impress of truth, or supported by any kind of evidence, of having in any way abused their position. I do not refer to the editorials which come out in party papers on the occasion of a defeat, whether by one side or the other. That is like the 24 hours that we give in Lower Canada to the clients who lose to curse their judges. I do not consider them of any more weight than the oburgations of the unfortunate clients. Beyond that I may say, and I say it without fear of contradiction, that the returning officers, as a class, have been remarkably free from any imputation of impropriety in their conduct, and certainly from any formal chages of such impropriety, and I do not at this moment call to mind anyone for years past who has been found guilty of any serious impropriety in the discharge of his functions. As to fixing elections on the same day, I do not know myself why that rule was adopted. I do not see any good reason for it, unless it be the fear of discussion. If there is a party in the country which is afraid of having public questions discussed, I can understand that they would like to fix the same day for all the elections, in order that the men who can explain the position of matters, in public affairs, would have their attention so much divided that there would be little or no opportunity for explaining or instructing the

people as to that position. But apart from that, the idea of having the elections all on one day has found favour in the country, and has been adopted in the case of our general elections. But in this instance it was impossible to fix all the elections on the one day, unless we had put them all off until after the middle of February—until pretty near the time when the House met—because hon. gentlemen will remember that the 31st December is the day on which the revising officers were required to send in their lists; and although such is the rule, a great many of them did not send in their lists until after the date. After those lists are sent in they have to be put in type, and it has been the practice to send back the proofs to the revising officers, in order that they may themselves correct the printed lists by the duplicates or memoranda in their possession.

Hon. Mr. MILLER—It is the law.

Hon. Mr. ABBOTT—I do not know that they are obliged by law to send the lists to the revising officers to correct the proofs, but they do so.

Hon. Mr. MILLER—Yes; and to sign them.

Hon. Mr. ABBOTT—In the first place, the lists did not come in until after they should have been here, and in the next place when the proofs were sent to the revising officers they were not returned as promptly as might have been desired. In some cases the revising officers made a reference to both parties in the constituency to assist in the correction of the proofs. In others they took great pains themselves to compare the lists with memoranda they had, all these being precautions taken to prevent what my hon. friend from Ottawa jestingly said might have occurred with regard to the lists when in the hands of the revising officers. But the consequence of all this was that these lists came dropping in at intervals of a day or two until about the 15th of February, when, I think, the last came down. So it would have been impossible, had we made up our minds to fix all the elections on one day, to have had that day fixed before the time I have mentioned, because the law requires a certain notice to be given before the nominations, and then an interval must elapse before the polling. On one occasion we did fix seven of the elections for one day, because we had seven lists ready. The lists were ready and the elections were