

Mr. WELDON (St. John). I move that the following question be asked: "What is your occupation?"

Mr. MITCHELL. Manufacturing members.
Motion agreed to.

Mr. DUNN. I am a teacher by occupation.

An hon. MEMBER. Preacher or teacher?

Mr. DUNN. Teacher—a public school teacher.

Mr. WELDON (St. John). I move that the following questions be put: "Were you at the time of your appointment as returning officer, or at any time prior, a member of any political association? If so, how long prior, and in what capacity were you therein?"

Mr. THOMPSON. I would not undertake at all to say that this question should not be put, but I submit to my hon. friend whether it is pertinent to the enquiry which is now being conducted. We are examining this person as to his own culpability; and I submit to the hon. gentleman—and I am not presenting this argument as a reason why the question should be voted down, because I should be exceedingly averse to offer any argument, against any question which any hon. member, sitting as a judge, thinks is pertinent—but I ask the hon. gentleman whether we are not now trying merely the culpability of the person at the Bar, and whether that question ought not to be tried distinct altogether from any question as to the propriety or the impropriety of his appointment. The hon. gentleman will see that the appointments of the returning officers are made by the Governor in Council, by Order in Council, and that a question as to whether he was a suitable person to be appointed or not is one for which the Government must be answerable, and in respect of which the person at the Bar should not be answerable at all. If, in the opinion of the House, the selection ought not to have been made of a person who belonged to any political organisation in the county, we are responsible; he is not, and I submit that it would be fairer—considering that we are acting in this matter purely as judges—it will surely be fairer to dissociate the question of the responsibility for his selection from any question of his culpability for what he did after he was selected. His appointment was not of his own choice or seeking; it was our act, for which we are responsible. The question with respect to how he conducted himself thereafter is, I submit, all that we should enquire about when he is at the Bar.

Mr. WELDON (St. John). If the object with which I asked the question was to make the Government responsible, I would agree with my hon. friend, but I do not put it with that view. I think, in a matter of this kind, such a question may be important with regard to the personality of the individual whom I am questioning, by leading up to certain other points, but not with any view of holding the Government responsible for it in the sense in which I put the question. It is true that the Government are responsible for the appointment of a returning officer, but they may be entirely ignorant of certain facts which if they had known they would not have appointed him. Therefore, as far as the Government is concerned, the question cannot, as far as I can see, affect it in any way unless it was known to the Government. But I am not asking the question in the sense of attributing any blame to the Government. I am only asking his position in that respect, because it may affect the right afterwards to consider or question his conduct and acts.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I think the objection taken by my hon. friend behind me (Mr. Thompson) should be almost conclusive, but, under the circumstances, as hon. gentlemen desire that everything should be explained, I think the question may be put.

Mr. MITCHELL. I agree with the right hon. gentleman. If one has his house burglarised, or if a robbery is committed on his person, and he goes to Scotland Yard, they go a long way round in order to get at the motives for the act. Now, what we want to know is whether political or other influence inspired this man.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Ah, ah.

Mr. MITCHELL. You may "ah" as much as you like, but we want to know what political or other influence existed in this case.

Mr. GUILLET. I would ask the hon. gentleman if he thinks it any crime to belong to either party in this country, unless it be the secession party in Nova Scotia.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. DUNN. Has the House said that I shall answer the question?

Mr. WELDON (St. John). I think, Mr. Speaker, that when the House calls upon the witness to answer the question, he should not ask any questions, but should answer the question put to him.

Mr. SPEAKER. You are ordered to answer the question.

Mr. DUNN. At the time of my appointment as returning officer I was not a member of any political association, but I was the secretary of the Liberal-Conservative Association of Queen's county prior to my appointment. How long before I am not in a position to say, because I cannot remember.

An hon. MEMBER. About how long?

Mr. DUNN. I may have been within a month; I cannot tell exactly.

Mr. WELDON (St. John). I move that the following question be asked:—"Did you apply for the position of returning officer personally or by letter, and to whom? Were you aware or informed anyone had applied on your behalf for the position? If so, who were you informed had done so?"

Motion agreed to.

Mr. SPEAKER. The House has ordered you to answer that question.

Mr. FERGUSON (*Counsel*). On behalf of the witness I object to the question.

Mr. MITCHELL. Too late.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No, no.

Mr. MITCHELL. According to the ruling of Mr. Speaker, these objections must be taken before the questions are read and ordered by the House.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Sit down.

Mr. MITCHELL. I will not sit down. I generally get through with what I have to say, and I intend to do so now. I take the objection that according to your ruling any objection to be taken by the counsel for the person at the Bar should be taken before the House orders the question to be put.

Mr. THOMPSON. Strictly speaking, that is no doubt the case, but in this instance I think the question was put to the House and declared carried before it was sent down to be examined, and I think it would be strict to insist upon it in this case.

Mr. McCARTHY. But I submit that the counsel at the Bar cannot interfere until the House pronounces upon the question. He is not sitting on the floor of the House, and cannot join in the debate, and until the question is put by