

regard to election returns, and it was the duty of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery formerly to make return of the men who should be declared elected in the different constituencies throughout the country. He also had other duties to perform towards both Houses of Parliament. Experience, I think, has shown, perhaps more during the course of recent elections than in earlier times, that we should have some person occupying almost a judicial position in this country to whom could be referred many of the difficult questions which arise periodically at every general election. It has therefore been thought that we should constitute some officer of this Parliament who would have very large powers and control over election machinery and over the return of candidates, and that the officer so constituted should be as far as possible removed from political or partisan control of every kind. The Bill proposes that such an officer be appointed, to be called the Chief Electoral Officer, and that his tenure of office be that of one of the Judges of the Superior Courts of the country, so that he shall be removable from office in the same manner as a judge might be removed. It is proposed that the office of Chief Electoral Officer shall take the place entirely of the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. He shall be a barrister of, I think, five years' standing. I am not sure whether that is in this Bill or not but it was in the original draft. But this Act provides that at the present time the man who shall fill the office of Chief Electoral Officer shall be the Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons. We know who the present Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons is, and in my own view, and I dare say in the view of this committee, he is a man eminently fitted to perform the duties of the office. This Act proposes to invest him with all the powers, duties and privileges which formerly appertained to the office of Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. Any duties which the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery performed in respect to this House or the Senate shall henceforth be performed by the Clerk of this House and the Clerk of the Senate respectively. Any other duties which the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery performed in any other direction have, as I think, been properly taken care of in the new proposed legislation. I think we are giving the Chief Electoral Officer much wider powers than those exercised by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, and personally I can see no reason

[Mr. Guthrie.]

whatever for continuing that ancient and honourable dignity after the appointment of a new official clothed with new and wider powers, and vested with wider discretion than ever related to the office of Clerk of the Crown in Chancery.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: I am glad to know that my hon. friend is anxious to remove elections from the region of patronage and to give a fair chance to both sides. I am very much pleased with his views on that question, and if we are to appoint a Chief Electoral Officer who will look after elections, I may suggest to him that the greatest piece of patronage in connection with elections is the appointment of returning officers in the different counties.

Mr. GUTHRIE: We had better wait until we get to that matter.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: I am going to make the suggestion that if my hon. friend has confidence in the man who is to be appointed Chief Electoral Officer he should hand over to that official the duty of appointing returning officers in the different counties.

Mr. GUTHRIE: I had better withhold my reasons until the proper time.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: It is quite proper that I should mention the matter now, so that my hon. friend can think over it. If my proposal were adopted it would remove elections from the regions of politics, and free this Act from one of the greatest objections which hon. gentlemen have to it, namely, that the Government should retain in their own right the power to appoint returning officers, who appoint the enumerators in the various districts. What does my hon. friend say to that?

Mr. GUTHRIE: I shall reserve what I have to say in that respect until the proper time arrives.

Mr. JACOBS: With reference to the Acting Solicitor General's remarks as to the appointment of the Electoral Officer, I note that the Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons is to get the position. Is it within the knowledge of the Acting Solicitor General that this gentleman has been appointed Chancellor of the Diocese of Ottawa? I would like to know if these positions are compatible. Perhaps a gentleman who was appointed Electoral Officer and Chancellor of the Diocese of Ottawa would be occupying a position similar to that of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.