

rest the whole country and interest, at one time or another, both sides of this House. I say that partisans have been appointed. What is the function of the returning officer? The function is, it is said, partly judicial, partly ministerial. He has to choose the deputies; he has very important duties of various descriptions to discharge. He has very great powers, very great powers indeed. Is it reasonable that the man who is to exercise those discretionary, those executive, those judicial and those ministerial powers should be chosen because he is the known, the avowed partisan of one of the two sides who are engaged in the conflict? I say that such men have been chosen, and not infrequently chosen during the recent contest. The hon. member for Richmond and Wolfe (Mr. Ives) said that in the great majority of cases in the Province of Quebec, the men chosen were sheriffs or registrars. Well, the answer is easy. Who appointed all those sheriffs or registrars? We know who they were and that they filled the bill of hon. gentlemen opposite; and that is the reason. It was not necessary to go further; in fact, hon. gentlemen might, perhaps, have gone further and fared worse. But it was not so in all respects, if I am rightly informed. At least it was not so as to the character of those officers everywhere. I will give an instance or two. Take the case of the hon. member for North Ontario (Mr. Madill). The returning officer for the north riding of Ontario, if I am rightly informed, was secretary of the Conservative Association, and he also acted as clerk to the revising officer at the last revision, and he was very closely connected, before his appointment of course, with the Tory committee. That was the position of the returning officer of the north riding of Ontario. We know how this is done from the hon. member from North Essex (Mr. Patterson). He said: I would be ashamed to recommend any one but a sheriff. So we know who made the recommendations to the Government for returning officers. The hon. gentleman said: I recommended the sheriff and he was appointed. The returning officer owed his appointment to the hon. gentleman.

Mr. PATTERSON (Essex). I did not say that. I said I would be ashamed to make any recommendation except that of the sheriff or registrar.

Mr. BLAKE. Yes; and the sheriff got the appointment. But there are hon. gentlemen who do not possess the same fortitude as the hon. member for Essex, because I find an hon. member recommended the secretary of the Conservative Association for returning officer. There is also the case of the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. Guilbault). In that case the returning officer had the additional qualification of being the brother-in-law of the Conservative candidate.

Mr. MADILL. Not at all.

Mr. LISTER. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Blake) is not speaking of North Ontario but of Joliette.

Mr. BLAKE. The hon. member for North Ontario had the secretary of the Conservative Association for returning officer and the hon. member for Joliette had his brother-in-law. Then there is the hon. member for Yamaska (Mr. Vanasse), who smiles upon me with the knowledge as to how these matters are worked. That hon. gentleman had a returning officer taken not from the county of Yamaska at all, but from Sorel.

Mr. VANASSE. He has lived for forty years in Yamaska.

Mr. BLAKE. I understand that he was from Sorel latterly; he may have come from Yamaska originally.

Mr. VANASSE. He was out of it 16 years ago for a short time.

Mr. BLAKE. I understand that the returning officer was a person entirely disqualified by his habits—which he

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exhibited during the election in the most open and disgraceful manner—from filling any office of trust whatever.

Mr. SPEAKER. I think the hon. gentleman goes rather far in attacking such persons. I have allowed the discussion on the general ground as covered by the resolution; but if hon. gentlemen, one after another, proceed to discuss the question of any particular returning officer, I must say it is out of order. I would advise the hon. gentleman to limit himself to the general ground on which I have allowed the discussion to proceed.

Mr. BLAKE. I am surprised at your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I submit. I have here some fifteen or twenty more cases, which I am prepared to particularise, and I have been challenged to do it; but I will put them by at this time.

An hon. MEMBER. We will get them again.

Mr. BLAKE. Yes, you will get them again. On the general ground, as I cannot particularise, I say there are abundant cases in which the secretaries of Liberal Conservative Associations, in which the lawyers who had been employed by the Conservatives to attend the revision of the list, in which other persons holding positions openly, intimately and ardently connected with the Conservative party, were chosen to fill the positions of returning officers; and I say that they accomplish their appointed work in many cases. I could show cases in which such persons gave appointments of agencies. Why, the hon. member for Richmond and Wolfe (Mr. Ives) spoke on this subject, and I was surprised at his indiscretion. There were ninety men who voted on agency certificates in the hon. gentleman's own election.

Mr. IVES. That was an election *canard*. There is not the slightest truth in that statement.

Mr. BLAKE. And sixty at another poll—

Mr. IVES. That is not true.

Mr. BLAKE—and sixty at another poll, according to the information I have received.

Mr. IVES. Your information is false, entirely false.

Mr. BLAKE. It may be so; I will give my information, and we will see presently. So in Provoncher (Manitoba) there were a very large number, and a very considerable number in the county of Selkirk; and in this and in other respects the elections were conducted in a most irregular manner. In many instances, also, of which I have particulars here, the old deputy returning officers, many of whom occupied the position for a great many years, who were familiar with the duties, who had the confidence of the people generally, were not appointed on this occasion, but others, unfamiliar with the duty and known only as Tory partisans, replaced them and did their appointed work. In other cases, of which I have the particulars here, partisan returning officers put the polls in isolated districts, at points extremely remote from and inconvenient to the Liberal electors who inhabited those districts, and to the direct advantage of the Tory candidates. In many cases the result happened that there were irregularities. I never heard of an election in which there were so many irregularities on the part of deputy returning officers as in this election, and it is largely due to the fact that there never was an election in which there were so many changes in the accustomed officers, in which there were so many replacements of these officers by men inexperienced in the past and animated only by a fervent zeal to serve the party with which they were connected. And, bear in mind, that those irregularities were availed of in some cases, and attempted to be availed of in others, to alter the absolute verdict which was obtained under such difficult circumstances. So it is that I say—