

The provisions of this bill were principally taken from the measure as it operated in Australia, and it differed but little from those of the law of England and Ontario. In Australia there was no number on the ballot paper corresponding with that upon the list of electors. In Ontario and England, owing to the presence of these numbers, it was possible after the election to find out how a particular elector had voted. Consequently, there was not the actual secrecy which was desired. The true principle of the ballot was that not a single man should be deterred from voting by fear of the discovery of how he had voted, which was very likely to be the case if the tickets were numbered. This law provided for absolute secrecy. He was glad that Ontario had adopted the other system. The two systems would be tried simultaneously, and, if it were found that the one was better than the other, he had no doubt of its adoption by the Legislature which had it not in use.

So far as the question of impersonation of voters was concerned, the ballot would not have any effect; but it would be effective insofar as the prevention of cheating and bribery. The number of impersonations was so very small that it was hardly worthwhile to number the votes to check them at the risk of violating the secrecy of the ballot. In England the ballot boxes were opened and counted by the deputy returning officers alone. Here the distance which the ballot boxes would have to be carried to be counted were very great—in some cases twenty, twenty-five or even one hundred and fifty miles, and there was great danger of persons lying in ambush and stealing them. The ballots had to be counted both by the deputy returning officer and the returning officer of the county.

It was provided by this act that immediately after the election the deputy returning officer should at once open and count the ballots, mailing to the returning officer a statement of the ballots tendered and the results of their own calculations, keeping a copy of the return himself. He had also to send the ballot boxes to the returning officer, who on receipt of the box, had only to verify the statements and declare the election. In such a case there would be no inducement for anyone to take hold of or destroy the ballot box, for, if it were destroyed, it would not affect the election, a copy of the return being in the possession of the returning officer. Besides, the deputy returning officer had to give to every elector who applied for it a certified copy of such statement.

In the United States complaints were made of ballot-box stuffing; but this could only occur in one of two ways—either after the elections or by putting in two or three ballots together. The new law of Canada provided that the ballot should be signed and put in the box in the presence of the deputy returning officer, who should be held responsible if more than one were put in. At the same time, the law provided that if more than one ballot were placed in the envelope, all should be destroyed. Besides, every elector who drew his ballot must vote. He could not take his paper away. The balloting paper was so made that only a cross was necessary opposite the name of the man for whom the elector desired to vote. If more names than were required were marked, the ballot must be thrown away, being null and void. A voter, if he made a mistake in filling up his ballot, could obtain a new one by giving up the old one to the deputy returning officer. The returning officer had to give

an account of every ballot which he had of those which were used, and of those which were not, whether spoiled or otherwise.

One difficulty had been provided for in the bill. This was to provide for people who were sick, or unable to leave their homes, or to distinguish the names of the candidates. The deputy returning officer was empowered to mark the ticket for such individuals in the presence of the friends of the individual.

He did not think he need enter upon the other and minor features of the bill. He would add that secret voting, while it did not prevent candidates paying away as much money as they pleased, would so regulate matters that the party who paid money would not know how the party whom he had paid had exercised the franchise, and thus the ballot would take away one of the principal inducements to bribery. Besides every precaution had been taken to punish corruption and bribery when found out and every provision was also made to strike off every vote which had been proved to have been bribed. In regard to this matter, there was often much difficulty in getting persons to go and testify to acts of corruption; but, by this law, if the judge found or believed any person to be guilty of an act of bribery he could order the clerk to bring that individual before him to be punished. There was no necessity of any complaint. This of course did not apply to the higher branches of the elections law, which were to be dealt with in the ordinary way. The law might be liable to objection. He had gone into its details pretty fully, and, if any member had any suggestion to make, he should be glad to receive them from any quarter. (*Cheers.*)

Hon. Mr. TUPPER said the House had long expected the passage of an election law. It was provided by the Union Act that the provisions of the electoral laws of the several Provinces should be utilized until the time arrived that Parliament should provide this important measure. He thought that those gentlemen who were present at the brief session of Parliament last autumn should remember that when the features of his new election law were announced by the right hon. leader of the Government, the then leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie) made the grave charge that he had made use of the different laws of the Provinces; yet, now that he was leader of the Government, he allowed his Minister of Justice to come down with a proposition that that very same course should be adopted. He thought that those who knew the views then expressed by the Premier were hardly prepared to adopt a bill that allowed the franchise to be changed day after day according to the caprice of the Legislatures of the different Provinces.

He thought that neither the House nor the country would be prepared to accept a measure with provisions so objectionable. If there were one thing over which the Commons should exercise control, it was when the foundations of representative liberty were at stake, and when it consented to allow the franchise to be under the control of another body, he would say that it had taken a step which would lower Parliament in the eyes of the world. Members of Parliament should meet on common ground so far as possible, and he was satisfied that the members would say that the exceptions were few and slight in which any difference existed between the relative independence and other characteristics which govern the franchise in the different Provinces.