

ent dates for elections in the various constituencies at a general election. We select one day, and if there is a good reason for this procedure it ought to apply where two or three vacancies exist at the same time, though not necessarily having occurred simultaneously.

Mr. GUTHRIE: If there were a large number of vacancies the Government might bring on by-elections in its favoured places where it was sure to carry constituencies for the purpose of influencing the general result. But for the life of me I cannot see what influence there would be as between two or three by-elections, and it will be very rare in the history of this country that in any six months' period we shall likely have three by-elections. It is possible; it has happened already; but it is very unusual to have three by-elections in a six months' period.

Mr. FIELDING: You do not need any better illustration of the matter than that which exists now in East Elgin, which has been vacant for a number of weeks.

Mr. GUTHRIE: Parliament said it might be vacant for six months.

Mr. FIELDING: Parliament says a thousand things that may be wrong and we are here to correct such things. Otherwise we should have no function at all.

Mr. H. A. MACKIE: In the case of East Edmonton, would the hon. member suggest that a definite date should be fixed, making it absolutely necessary to hold a by-election there to synchronize with by-elections in other places? You could not get half the people to the polls.

Mr. FIELDING: I say that after vacancies have existed for a certain reasonable period the elections should be held simultaneously. I do not think that the Government ought to take upon themselves the power to pick out certain dates for the holding of by-elections where they think the results will be favourable to themselves. I know this was done in times past. I am not a "holier than thou" man, and I admit that I did it myself when I was a minister. But that is no reason why we should not reform practices that are bad, and I am sorry that the Acting Solicitor General, having given us such a cordial invitation to offer suggestions which we might think necessary, should refuse to adopt a very necessary reform.

Mr. GUTHRIE: That is a matter of opinion. I do not think the proposal is one

in the nature of a reform. Last autumn a special committee of the House sat on several occasions. I was chairman of the committee and we considered the whole matter and came to certain conclusions which received the unanimous approval of the House. Why should we then go back on the system we adopted three or four months ago? My hon. friend has not urged anything that was not urged before the special committee.

Mr. FIELDING: Last year we did not deal with the point under discussion. We simply fixed the time within which the writ must be issued. If my hon. friend cannot see the force of the illustration I have given in the present vacancy in East Elgin, then I think it is hopeless to expect that he will be persuaded into accepting my proposal.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Is there any purpose in elections at all, other than to give representation to the constituencies in the country? That is the purpose of a general election and it is also the purpose of every by-election. I understand my hon. friend (Mr. Fielding) to emphasize the point; that as a result of the Government's administration of the existing law, some constituencies in which there have been vacancies will soon be represented in this Parliament, while another unrepresented constituency will be deprived of that right. If the Government were willing to observe the fundamental principle of elections they would give the electors in East Elgin the right to be represented. But the Government are denying them that right by refusing to issue the writ for the election in that constituency, and this is something against which we should all strenuously protest. On behalf of the electors of East Elgin, as part of the people of Canada, I think the Government should as soon as possible take steps to have that constituency represented in Parliament.

Mr. PROULX: The term of this Parliament is five years, and I think it would be well to have the general election on a fixed date every five years. The Government of Ontario is proposing to have provincial elections at fixed dates.

Mr. GUTHRIE: A lot of things are being proposed there.

Mr. FIELDING: Is there any change in subsection 9? My recollection is that the unfortunate candidate who loses his deposit only gets it back from the Auditor