

which was passed last session for the taking of the soldiers' vote provided that the vote should be taken in a certain manner—I need not direct attention to the method at the present time—and, the special officers appointed to count them were required to report their proceedings to the Secretary of the High Commissioner's office in London and to the Commissaire Général in France, who were required to send at once a telegraphic report to the general returning officer, and to forward the poll books and all records connected with the taking of the vote. Two duties, therefore, were imposed upon the Commissaire in France and the Secretary of the High Commissioner's office in London: to send a communication by telegraph to the general returning officer, and to forward at the same time the poll books and the records.

The duties of the general returning officer in this connection are defined in section 14 of the War-Time Elections Act:

Upon receipt of my telegram from the Secretary of the High Commissioner's Office, or the Commissaire Général du Canada in France stating the number of votes given for the several candidates in any electoral district, the General Returning Officer shall cause the information therein contained to be made available to any person applying therefor.

That is all the effect which is given to this communication by telegraph. The information may be given to any person who asks for it. It has no more effect than that. It is not official. It is simply to satisfy the curiosity of anybody who may inquire.

Then when he has received the poll books and records and all the documents relating to the counting of the votes taken in Europe these are his duties.

Upon receipt from the Secretary of the High Commissioner's Office the Commissaire Général du Canada in France and the special Returning Officers in Canada of the statements referred to in Section 12 subsection four of this part.

That is to say, the poll books and other records.

The General Returning Officer shall add the number of votes given for or applicable to the respective candidates in each electoral district, as disclosed by such statements, to the votes given for the candidates as shown by the certificate of the Returning Officer made pursuant to section 13 of this Part, and shall openly proclaim and shall return pursuant to the provisions of section 211 of Part III, as being duly elected a member or members to represent such electoral district

That is what completes the report upon the King's writ. The General Returning Officer was bound to count the votes in public, and to make his report accordingly,

and then the election was complete. Have these formalities been complied with by the General Returning Officer? They have not been complied with, and the reason why they have not been complied with is simply this—and my assertion cannot be successfully controverted—that at this moment the General Returning Officer has not received from Europe the records of the votes given by the soldiers in Europe. I will come presently to the reason why these formalities have not been complied with. But I may be told before I go further: This is a simple formality; it does not matter much whether the candidates for membership in this House are reported upon by telegraphic communication or whether they are solemnly reported upon when the records are received; the certification is simply a formality. If it is simply a formality, why do we have it in the Statute? Personally, I am not very particular as to non-compliance with the strict letter of the law when such non-compliance does not defeat the purpose of the men who are responsible for the law; but it is a good principle of law, common sense, fairness, that no man shall be permitted to disregard the law in order to shield or to conceal or to get rid of his own laches. This, however, is exactly what has been done to-day by the Government. Why is it that there are laches on the part of the Government? If the writs had been issued immediately after dissolution, the records would have been received before now; but Parliament prorogued on the 20th of September last and Parliament was not dissolved and the writs of election were not issued until the first days of November. Some five weeks passed before the writs were issued and before the people were summoned to the election. Why was not Parliament immediately dissolved? Could any reason of public welfare be invoked? Could any reason be given for it? I speak with knowledge, and no one will contradict me—the reason why Parliament was not dissolved immediately after prorogation was because the Government were not ready and they had not time to organize the working of the War-time Elections Act. On account of the Government having waited until the month of November to issue the writs, to-day, the 19th of March, the records of the voting that took place in Europe have not been received. How is it, then, that we have in the Votes and Proceedings a list of the members elected? If we have this list of members elected, it is not in accordance with the law. How then is it we have it? How is it that the returning