

Mr. CASGRAIN. The abuse is great, and I think the time has come to stop all this. The difficulty was that under the Controverted Elections Act it was not possible to adopt all the provisions of the English Act or to appoint a public prosecutor whose business it would be to attend trials and ex-officio prosecute anybody against whom proof had been made of having committed an offence against the Act. If you could introduce this into the Controverted Elections Act or make the Act so stringent that it would be impossible to saw off one offence against another offence committed by another party, then, we would attain the object I have in view.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. The Controverted Elections Act contains that provision now. You cannot do it legally.

Mr. CASGRAIN. People drive through the Controverted Elections Act very easily. I suggested the other evening certain amendments which I think should be made to the Controverted Elections Act by which it would be impossible to saw off these election protests. The only remedy is the remedy adopted in the English law, and that is to provide a public prosecutor who would attend the trials, and ex-officio, take the necessary proceedings. Everybody is interested in having pure elections. Aside from other considerations we are interested personally in that we should make elections as cheap as possible. Elections are becoming so expensive that it is almost ruinous to conduct an election, and if you succeed you have to spend four or five or six months in Ottawa, which is driving worthy men out of political life. We are all interested in having these elections as pure and cheap as possible, and we should take every means to accomplish that end.

Mr. INGRAM. Before the hon. gentleman takes his seat, I would like if he would explain the first line of section 107d :

It is prohibited to lease or let as a place of assembly for an election committee or an election meeting any house or part of a house, &c.

Does 'to let' mean to rent?

Mr. CASGRAIN. Yes.

Mr. INGRAM. Suppose I went into a hotel, met a few friends and proposed to hold a committee meeting, and we sat down, would the provision apply to that?

Mr. CASGRAIN. No.

Mr. INGRAM. Well, then I have no objection to it.

Mr. SPROULE. I take it to mean that, because this is a custom which prevails very largely, and a hotel is the only convenient place for the purpose. On election day all hotels are closed, and there is no liquor sold, so far as I know. But on other days hotels are largely used for committee rooms

when you do not want to go to the expense of renting permanently and keeping up a committee room where you must provide light and heat and a man to take care of the room. I do not think the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Montmorency will be practicable in Ontario. That part in regard to liquor, I think, would be very difficult to work out; still, in some respects, I think it might be made suitable. In regard to pairing off at elections—

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. That is not in this Bill.

Mr. SPROULE. In regard to that I have always held for a great many years past that it is one of the most baneful things under our system. It tends more to demoralize political life than anything I know of.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. It is a regular blackmailing system.

Mr. SPROULE. I have fought against it for ten or fifteen years, and I regret to say that I have not got much countenance from men that I had a right to expect it from—men in public life in Canada. For many years past it has been not only a blackmailing system, but it has been a means devised to prevent frauds coming out that otherwise would come out. Men who take part in it and who assist in carrying it out are particeps criminis after the Act, just as much as one who stood by and looked at a crime being committed and took no part to prevent it. In my judgment it is one of the absolute necessities of the time, that we should put some law on the statute-book to prevent this as much as possible. The law which we have contemplates that when an election petition is filed it is filed upon certain allegations that are sworn to. They are either true or false, so far as the party making the affidavit knows. If they are true they should at least go into court and try to prove the allegations. If they are false the party who makes that affidavit should be sent to penitentiary.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I know that all legislation of this character is found to be difficult in its operation, but that is not a reason why we should attempt to put such legislation on the statute-book and make an honest effort to enforce it. I sympathize with the hon. member for Montmorency (Mr. Casgrain) in the views he has expressed and I trust that the hon. Solicitor General, while perhaps not adopting the amendments proposed in their entirety, will endeavour to accept them as far as possible if the law can be so amended as to meet the abuses which the hon. member has described. But, the conditions which the hon. gentleman has described are not confined to the province of Quebec, and there are no doubt abuses that we should deal with by legislation. Some hon. gentlemen may