

take. Then it is possible that some people will be driven away from voting. Personally I think there is another way in which this matter could be handled but it is not my business to make up this law.

Mr. BENNETT: Mr. Chairman, I hesitate to take up the time of the committee but I have a very strong opinion as to the desirability of having some approach to what I call honesty in the conduct of elections.

Mr. LAPOINTE: We all have; my right hon. friend should not say that.

Mr. BENNETT: There is only one way to have it and that is to provide adequate safeguards to prevent dishonesty. I remember one statement which was made to me in connection with an election in eastern Canada. It was stated that an impersonator came here from an American city and voted forty-two times. There is only one way to stop that kind of thing, have them sign a paper. No impersonator will take the risk as perjury is an extraditable offence.

Mr. LAPOINTE: He would be perjuring himself just the same without this.

Mr. BENNETT: The former Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) knows perfectly well that it is a different thing when a returning officer says something rather quickly and the voter replies, "so help me God." I was impressed by what the hon. member for Toronto Northwest (Mr. MacNicol) said last night that the provisions which have to do with the franchise should be excluded. They have been excluded and the man now swears that he is a British subject, is over twenty-one years of age and is the person named on the list.

A few years ago there was an election in a city in this country—I speak from memory and subject to correction—where thirty prominent persons found that they could not vote when they went to the polls because they had been voted before eleven o'clock by persons who were not residents of this country. There was another case in which evidence was unearthed that wigs and costumes had been used in order to change the appearance of these men. With the happy reputation which Canadian law has these people will not take the risk of signing their names and being charged with perjury to be proved by the production of a document. Perjury without the production of documents is always a difficult thing to prove but when you have a man sign a note that he is the person named you will stop this sort of thing very quickly.

That is the only purpose I have in mind and perhaps I must accept responsibility for the form of this section. I did not draft it but I said I thought it was highly desirable that it should be in that form. I say this from my own experience and in the light of information which has been given to me. I believe this information was correct as it was given to me by a gentleman whom I have every reason to believe knew whereof he was speaking. In a moment of frankness he told me that he had participated in the things to which I referred.

As to the polls being crowded, I do not think that will occur. I recall a case during a provincial election where because of the complexity of the vote it was thought desirable to challenge everyone who came in. Although it was thought that this would crowd the polls, it was found that everyone had an opportunity to vote. These polls will open at eight o'clock in the morning and close at six o'clock in the evening and everyone knows that it is the honest people who will be challenged.

Mr. LAPOINTE: They may be.

Mr. BENNETT: That is always a contingency to expect; I may be challenged or my hon. friend may be. However, this law is aimed at the crook.

Mr. LAPOINTE: It will hit the honest man.

Mr. BENNETT: It will not. How will it touch the honest man unless he is challenged?

Mr. LAPOINTE: He will be.

Mr. BENNETT: There is no chance of that happening to any considerable extent because public opinion would not support a scrutineer who took such action. We are trying to prevent fraud and dishonesty and to permit the exercise of the franchise by those persons who legitimately have the right to exercise it. I do suggest that the committee should adopt this section because not to do so would look as though we were not anxious to prevent what has become a real evil in Canada, impersonation. Speaking from my experience as a lawyer which while it has not been great, at least has been varied, I say that the crook will be through the minute he is asked to sign a document.

Mr. CARDIN: He will not sign his own name, he will sign the name of the person on the list.

Mr. BENNETT: That signature will not be in his handwriting and he thereby steps right into the hands of the prosecution.