

Mr. McINERNEY. Then I protest against it being proceeded with in that way. It should be printed so that we may have it before us.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. I think perhaps that I said what I ought not to have said, and I apologize to my hon. friend.

Mr. McINERNEY. The hon. gentleman cannot expect me to remember every word merely from his reading of it.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Then the hon. member for Kent should accept my statement of it.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. It is not to be proceeded with now; it will come up on the discussion of a subsequent part of the Bill.

Mr. McINERNEY. Then what is the use of discussing it?

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. Who is discussing it?

Mr. McINERNEY. We are all discussing it. If it is not to be proceeded with now what is the use of discussing it at the present time? This amendment was read by the Solicitor General after it had been put in his hands by the Minister of Railways. I want him to understand that I do not want to blame him for the absurdities of it which are apparent to me. But I do blame the Minister of Railways who, with his local knowledge of the province of New Brunswick ought to know better, for proposing any such amendment as this. I cannot understand him, if you are going to have three or four polling booths and you are going to allow your returning officer to put up your lists in three or four different parts, how you are going to have the same list in every polling booth. It has not been made plain to me yet. And, in allowing the returning officer to revise the list, I say you give him a power which is very dangerous, you give him the power, intentionally or unintentionally to leave names of electors off the lists. Hon. gentlemen may claim that I am not discussing this seriously, and they may say I do not want to make this Act as perfect as possible, but I say it is my desire to do so, and to help the Solicitor General to the best of my poor ability. But I see grave difficulties and tremendous danger in this section as proposed, therefore I protest against it, and if I cannot make this committee see that I have good reason to do so, it is because I have not the power to make them understand me.

Mr. McDOUGALL. There is no qualification provided in the Act for the returning officer, there is no qualification provided now that the revisers shall be competent to revise the list. We have officers among whom are included farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters and all kinds of tradesmen to constitute our board of revisers who make up these

Mr. FITZPATRICK.

lists, none of these men, possibly, with the necessary qualifications to understand the law and make up a proper list. In the next place, we run great risk of having people go to the Government and recommend the appointment of men as returning officers who are not competent to carry out an election under the statute. What may the returning officer do? He may take the list, leave as many names off as he likes, substitute one for another, take down a name in a wrong way or in such a way that it cannot be read, and there is no way by which a man can examine the list except on polling day in the polling booth. A candidate or his agent may not be able to see the list before election day. The First Minister said there was no difficulty in dividing a list and subdividing a polling district and getting a proper and suitable list for the voters to poll their votes. I have been connected with elections and voters' lists in my own constituency for thirty years and I am pretty familiar with the boundaries of the subdivisions in my district. And yet I would not, as returning officer, undertake to subdivide the polling districts in my county without the aid of some local people from these districts. I could not do it properly otherwise. But we are going to provide by this Act, that a man living, perhaps twenty or thirty miles away from the polling subdivisions, is to subdivide it into one or more subdivisions. It may be that this will be done by a man who has never set foot in the district. Why, it is utterly impossible. That being so, I will make a suggestion to the hon. Solicitor General, and it is this: In order to enable the returning officer to do it intelligently and without mistakes, when he happens to be unfamiliar with the district, I would suggest that provision should be made that the local revisers who made up the former lists or are, in the meantime, in authority to provide lists for the coming year, be called to the aid of the returning officer, to assist him in the subdivision of the district. It is asked by hon. gentlemen on the Government side of the House, if, in making the subdivision, the two polling booths cannot be placed closely together, and in that way there will be no serious misunderstanding as to where the people are to pull their votes. I feel positive that when the attempt is made to subdivide the polling district, and especially when the polling district is perhaps ten miles in length—we have many that are fifteen miles in length and proportionately broad—when the people find that the district is divided, they will be absolutely opposed to coming from the distant parts of the division to poll their votes at two polls held at one place. From the time of passing this Act they will press to have a polling booth for each subdivision at a central point within the subdivision. So, it is well for the House to understand the trouble they will have to face and that the returning officer will have to face in the unpopularity of such