

cations of a son, and an employer as to the qualifications of a wage-earner, but to permit other persons, upon mere hearsay, which is not recognised in any other court as evidence, to take declarations on information and belief, would be a great misfortune. That would be putting a great number of names, in many cases, upon the lists which ought not to be there, and the expense and difficulty of getting them off would be very great indeed. I think the case my hon. friend from Kent gave, which happened in his own county, is a good illustration of what might take place where declarations of this sort are allowed to be made. I think the hon. gentleman should not admit those declarations as to information and belief, but if he persists in admitting them, he should also provide that, in every case, the person upon whose declaration, based on information and belief, names have been put on the list, should appear at the final revision for the purpose of being cross-examined as to the sources of the information and belief. And in case he should fail to appear, other evidence should be necessary to maintain those names upon the list.

Mr. BURDETT. I would suggest that the hon. Minister should have some mode of preserving the declarations, in order that they may be obtainable by persons who require to use them. These declarations should be filed with the clerk or the revising officer, who would, when necessary, give certified copies. In this way persons who made frivolous declarations could be held up to public ridicule. The declarations should also be drawn up in the same form as affidavits, based on absolute knowledge, which are sworn to, and used in legal proceedings, and an indictment should lie against the party making the declaration in case he did so without reasonable grounds for such knowledge and belief, so that dishonest men on either side should not be in a position to have at will names entered on the list which the opposite party would be put to considerable trouble and expense in getting struck off.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. I thought that, having discussed the question of information and belief the other day, we would hardly renew it, at any rate, until the third reading of the Bill, and that by that time my hon. friends opposite, having carefully considered the question, would have withdrawn their objections. We have provided that the revising officer shall be obliged to exhibit those declarations, and shall be obliged to furnish any person with copies who desires the same. As regards the appearing at final revision, the hon. gentleman's amendment would require every person who made a declaration to come and substantiate it, even though the application was not contested.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). Only in cases where names were entered on information or belief, and not from personal knowledge.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. Even as to those, in many cases there would be no contest at all; and where there is a contest the provisions of the law as to notice to appear and result of non-appearance and subpoena are sufficient.

Mr. WELDON (St. John). When I find cases such as those stated by the hon. member for Kent and the hon. member for South Victoria, I think every precaution should be taken, and it would be better not to accept names on information and belief.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. It would be utterly impossible to frame an Act which would prevent wrong decisions, and that appears to have been the case in Kent. I promised to make provision for copies of these lists being sent to postmasters, and, in Prince Edward Island, to secretaries of school districts. I, therefore, propose that sub-section 2 should be amended in that way.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell).

Mr. PLATT. Is there any provision for the distribution of the ten copies for the unsuccessful candidate in case he is dead?

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. No.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). I have received a letter to-day which I will read, and the hon. gentleman will see from that how this provision in regard to obtaining information has worked. The writer says:

"I regret to see that one of the proposed amendments to the Franchise Act permits the revising officer to add names to the voters' list on the declarations of information and belief of the declarant. Now, any one who knows anything of the methods of the Government supporters and unscrupulous revising officers must see the wide door here opened to fraud. Why, in this way John Mason was enabled to add scores of names to the Kent lists in 1884, that, at the expense of several hundred dollars and the time of Mr. Christie and myself for months, we were unable to get off, although they had no legal right to be on. We urged before Judge Woods the utter absurdity of putting on names in that way; we pointed out that Mason, who was then a comparative stranger in Chatham, could not possibly have any acquaintance with the persons whose names he sought by his declaration to put on the list. We offered to call Mr. Mason himself, who was then in court, to prove on his own testimony that he did not even know the persons who he declared, to the best of his information and belief, were entitled to be put on. Mr. O'Neill, who was acting for Mr. Smith, objected, and for fear we might be permitted to call him, Mason got up and left the court. The revising officers who desired to act honestly and fairly with both parties refused to receive such evidence. Under the amendment proposed, this method that was rejected as unfair, and in point of information, worthless, by many and the best revising officers, is now given a statutory effect. I trust this provision may not become law."

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. There is one other point to which I agreed to call the attention of the Committee, and that was to make provision for the correction of clerical errors. Two suggestions were made in reference to that. One was that there should be a correction of errors after the list is revised and before it is transmitted to the Queen's Printer, and the other was that the correction should be made after the list is printed. I think the only correction that is feasible is one to be made before the list is transmitted to the Queen's Printer. When the list is transmitted to him, it has been signed and is the electoral list. Any errors which may creep in while it is being printed might be corrected otherwise, but the revising officer has no longer any control over the list after it has been transmitted. I move that these words shall be inserted in the 21st section, that is in section 5 of the present Bill, line 46:

"After giving reasonable notice of delay, so as to enable errors to be corrected."

Mr. PATERSON (Brant.) I believe one of the suggestions to which the Minister alludes was made by me. I do not pretend to be able to frame an Act, but I see a considerable difficulty, and I think the Minister does also, in this. If the list comes to the printer as finally revised by the revising officer, and some errors should occur in the printing office, if some names should drop out, there should be some machinery by which they can be restored; and the same in regard to names which are not correctly spelled or any errors which may occur in the list finally printed. There should be some machinery by which such errors could be rectified. I observe in the newspapers that, in the lists used in the late contests in regard to the Scott Act, some well-known residents in this neighborhood, some property holders who had an undoubted right to vote, found their names were not on the list, and they could not vote. If we are to have a list made in that way, it should be taken in such a way for elections that there should be no possibility of mistake or error in the printing office. This seems to me to be one of the most important points to guard, and I would like the Minister to say definitely that there cannot be a mistake made in that way. Does he propose that the list which the revising officer certifies to and sends to the printing office shall be the list to be used, notwithstanding any errors in the printed copy?