

cers power, where the number did exceed three hundred, to put that number or more on the list without dividing the district, and that was done in accordance with that amending Act, which the revising officer of Cape Breton and other counties acted upon. I have been attending closely to the revision of the lists, and I do not think it would have escaped me, if such had not been the law. I believe that the Solicitor General will find there was an Act passed giving that power to the revising officer. What I protest against is, giving power to a political appointee, such as a returning officer, to divide a large district into divisions and say that from A to B shall vote here, and from B to L somewhere else, and so on, and not state on what day it shall be done or before whom it shall be done, but allow it to be done by himself, perhaps the night before the election. You are opening wide the door to fraud.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. What kind of fraud?

Mr. McINERNEY. I shall tell the hon. gentleman. The returning officer might, the night before, or two or three days before, an election, in his own office, take the lists of the district No. 1 and cut up that district, and leave off the lists a certain number of names, either intentionally or unintentionally. He may make a mistake, if he will, or leave them off maliciously. In any case, you are putting tremendous power into his hands. There is no revision over that power which he exercises. It is done before nobody; it is done in no court; no one need be present to see what he does and you give him the power to wipe off the list names of men who may be opposed to him in politics. That is what it means. This man is not a judicial officer, he need not have any great standing in the community. He is appointed by a political party sometimes to do their party work, and you say you are going to give such an individual the power to divide up the votes of the district and cut the alphabet into pieces in the way I have mentioned, and leave off hundreds of men who are entitled to vote.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. No.

Mr. McINERNEY. What is going to stop him?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. It is not to be assumed that we are all blackguards.

Mr. McINERNEY. In making laws, you are not supposed to make any such assumption, but you are not estopped from making it. You are supposed to make laws that will not permit any actions of this kind. You are to guard the public interest. This is not an ordinary law; you are dealing with the rights and privileges of men—you are dealing with the franchise.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER. The hon. gentleman will please address the Chair.

Mr. McINERNEY.

Mr. McINERNEY. I mean, of course, the House is dealing with the franchise. The sense in which I used the word, I think, was quite parliamentary. You are dealing with the rights and privileges of men, and yet you allow a third party named for political purposes, to take away—

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Nothing of the sort.

Mr. McINERNEY. This law permits him.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. No, it does not.

Mr. McINERNEY. Well, it gives him the chance.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. No, not at all.

Mr. McINERNEY. Will the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fitzpatrick) tell me how this law prevents it?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Here is a polling subdivision in which a certain number of men are entitled to vote. These men know that they have a right to go to a certain locality and there they will find a polling booth and all the paraphernalia for the exercise of that right. When they reach there, instead of having to deal with one ballot box and one returning officer, they will find they are to deal with two, three or four, and they record their vote in one box or the other, according to the subdivision of the list.

Mr. McINERNEY. But that is not the point.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. That is the very point.

Mr. McINERNEY. I have certainly not made myself plain to the hon. gentleman.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. The hon. gentleman (Mr. McInerney) must remember that we are dealing with a serious matter.

Mr. McINERNEY. I am serious. I do not think that the Solicitor General should cast such an insinuation across the floor. I am speaking seriously and I sincerely believe that what I say is true.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. The returning officer has not discretion except to subdivide the existing list.

Mr. McINERNEY. Does that prevent him from leaving off half the names?

The PRIME MINISTER. Why should we make separate lists?

Mr. McINERNEY. That is what is proposed.

The PRIME MINISTER. Not at all, he subdivided the existing list.

Mr. McINERNEY. But the existing list cannot be in four places at once.