

worse for a candidate who has been rightfully and honestly elected to be disqualified afterwards than to lose any money he may have in the world. Although the law, generally speaking, is the same as what I am

objecting to now, yet, taking 4 p.m. into consideration the fact that this matter is exceedingly important, I would not have a candidate placed in the position where a conspiracy might be framed up against him, either by his adversaries or by anybody else. I said at the beginning of my remarks that I did not believe that the committee would share my views; but I want to put myself on record on this point, and perhaps some day will come when it will be found that there are reasons for fearing that what I have stated may happen. The acting Prime Minister (Sir George Foster) asked me a few minutes ago whether I knew of any particular cases. I am not conversant with all the electoral cases in the Dominion of Canada, but under a law framed like this it is always very dangerous for a candidate to go electioneering alone without anybody as a witness with him to protect him. That seems strange, but it is true.

Section agreed to.

On section 40—nomination of candidates.

Mr. FIELDING: With regard to subclause 1, I presume that is the existing law, but these are days of reform. Subclause 1 reads:

At every general election he—

That is the Governor General in Council. —shall for such purpose fix one and the same day in all electoral districts.

That is a very wise rule. Why should it not apply also to the case of a number of bye-elections occurring at the same time? For instance, why should we to-day be deprived of the pleasure of having a representative of East Elgin in the House of Commons? What reason can be given why the people of Temiskaming can have a member but the people of East Elgin cannot? I would suggest to the Acting Solicitor General that a clause be added to provide that wherever there are several vacancies at the same time the elections should be held on the same day. I do not think there is any answer to that argument. If it is a good argument in the case of a general election it holds equally good where a number of vacancies occur.

Mr. CROTHERS: What would the hon. member say in the case of a vacancy occurring a week before the election?

[Mr. Denis.]

Mr. FIELDING: That is a matter of detail. Where there are a number of bye-elections they should be held simultaneously. We have to-day a vacancy in East Elgin. What reason can be given for keeping that constituency vacant while members are to be allowed to represent Temiskaming and St. James? The Acting Prime Minister was asked to-day if he could say when the writ would be issued for East Elgin, and he replied quite truly that he did not know. Is that good politics? I submit to the Acting Solicitor General that in the spirit in which he has invited suggestions he ought to accept the proposal I make.

Mr. GUTHRIE: As a matter of fact I do not think there is anything in the suggestion. If the vacancies in the bye-elections all occurred on the same day there might be something in the suggestion. But Parliament in its wisdom last session decided on a course, having considered the question in special committee, and also in debate in the House. The course decided on by the House is a great improvement on the practice of former years, providing as it does that a bye-election must take place within six months of the occurrence of the vacancy. I think that is a pretty good solution of any difficulty which existed in the past. Six months is not a long time for a constituency to be vacant, for my hon. friend from Queen's and Shelburne knows that in the past constituencies have been kept open for years.

Mr. FIELDING: I know that, but I say that this is a time for reform.

Mr. GUTHRIE: And we have reformed the practice. We reformed it as recently as last autumn, and having then deliberately adopted a course which I am confident is an improvement we should at least give the new system a trial.

Mr. FIELDING: My hon. friend is wrong. We did not deal with this question last autumn. We dealt with the question of the period of time within which the writ must be issued. Where a number of vacancies have occurred and are existing at the same time, a reasonable time having elapsed since their occurrence, what good reason can be given for the Government's selecting one day for one bye-election and another day for another?

Mr. GUTHRIE: What good reason can be urged against it?

Mr. FIELDING: The same reason that applies to general elections. We would not give the Government power to choose differ-