

Plebiscite Act

Mr. GRAYDON: I hope the minister will not fall into the habit of calling it a card. If it were a card it would not be so bad, but it is a piece of tissue paper which the government gave us a year or two ago, and it is hard to keep it in one's pocket.

Mr. McLARTY: I am not going to argue as to the quality of the paper used. I still have mine, fortunately. I have it on me. The point I was going to make was this. While the registrants are required to report any change of address, there is no change of address endorsed on the registration certificate. In view of the fact that it is not as effective an identification certificate as it might otherwise be—

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): It has the registrant's signature and that is some identification.

Mr. McLARTY: There is no question it would be some identifying mark of the particular registrant; but when you consider the shifting of the population in the intervening time, I question very much if it would be of any great value. In addition to that, it would involve this: each enumerator making his enumeration would have to see individually the registration card of every registrant he put on his enumerator's list.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): No.

Mr. McLARTY: Each enumerator putting a man on the list would have to do that if you made it a condition, as suggested in this amendment. He would have to see the individual whom he was putting on his list.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That does not follow.

Mr. GRAYDON: It is only for voting at the polling booth.

Mr. McLARTY: I withdraw that. The amendment says at the time of voting. I do suggest, however, that, especially in the rural areas, as the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart suggested, there would be quite a large number disfranchised by reason of their inability to produce the registration card. We argued in this committee yesterday about the ballot being a difficult one. If that is a fact, would it not be fair to leave penalties to the registration act itself, rather than make this act to some extent in the nature of a penalty by disfranchising men who are supposed to be punished under the original act.

Mr. NEILL: The minister has taken the line that if we compel a man to produce his registration card as a condition of voting, we are using the loss of his franchise as a penalty under the registration act. That is his argument. I submit that we had a precedent in

[Mr. McLarty.]

the last war. We had to produce our registration card on almost every occasion when we played any public part. For instance, if I wanted to travel and wanted a railway ticket I had to produce the registration card, and if I did not do so I did not get the railway ticket. It might be held that the right to travel is a very important liberty of the subject, the liberty to move around as he likes; nevertheless it was held that one had to produce the registration card because it was considered that in a time of war it was essential to weed out those who did not have registration cards. I think the same applied to getting money orders, although I am not certain about that. At any rate we have a precedent to go by. Mr. Bennett had a very logical way of putting forward the argument on both sides and then adding, "on balance I favour so and so". I think it would be fair to say that, on balance, it would be fair to put this condition in; it may disenfranchise some but, on balance, it will have the great advantage of catching a number of people who had not the manliness or patriotism or obedience to law to register.

Amendment (Mr. Hansell) negatived.

Section 4, subsection 1, agreed to.

On section 4, subsection 2—Disqualifications of ordinary voters.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Would the minister state concretely and explicitly the disqualifications of ordinary voters contemplated by this subsection? At the moment I am not raising any objection to the clauses of this bill. I think I understand part of them; part of them I do not understand. Subsection 2 provides:

The persons disqualified from voting as ordinary voters at the plebiscite shall be those persons disqualified from voting under the provisions of paragraphs (d) to (k), both inclusive, and paragraph (m) of subsection 2 of section 14 of the Dominion Elections Act, 1938. . . .

They are all set out; paragraph (m) is included to cover every person who is disqualified from voting under any law relating to the disqualification of electors for illegal practices. Those are quite clear. I call attention to paragraph (i):

(i) every person who is disqualified by reason of race from voting at an election of a member of the legislative assembly of the province in which he or she resides and who did not serve in the military, naval or air forces of Canada in the war of 1914-1918.

Paragraph (j) refers to the order in council of 1898; I think that relates to the Doukhobors.

In particular I should like to know what provinces have passed legislation which would