

on the political parties to drag them there. Worse than that, it places an evil advantage in the hands of the party that is well financed. Elections have been made so expensive in this way that the independence of the party elected is at stake. I think that the need for reform at this time is so great that it counterbalances any hesitation we should have in applying compulsion, if necessary, to the individual citizen. In my judgment it is in the interests of our country and of the electors themselves, that the people be required to go to the polls. If this were done, our political system would be greatly improved.

There are a number of minor details in the Elections Act which are not touched by this bill. For instance, there is considerable doubt in the minds of many people as to the right of a scrutineer to give information as to who has voted. It has been ruled several times that secrecy applies to how people vote, and not to who has or has not voted. As the Act is indefinite in this regard, it would be a great boon to a large number of people if it were made amply clear that a scrutineer, or anyone having knowledge of what is taking place inside a poll, is entitled to give information as to who has voted.

A provision in the present Act makes it an offence for anyone to vote who has been paid by any candidate or party for services in connection with an election. In the past I was able to get sufficient voluntary scrutineers and poll captains to work without charge. I do not know that I could do it today, and I am quite sure that most candidates cannot. All parties now compensate the persons—mostly young women, at least in the cities—who sit in the polls all day and act as scrutineers. It is an offence for these ladies to cast their votes. That is all wrong. There is no more reason for disfranchising a paid scrutineer than for disfranchising the deputy returning officer, who also has to remain on the job all day, and who is paid.

I hope that this is not the last amendment of the Elections Act to be dealt with during the present parliament, but that next session the whole question will again be submitted to a committee of another place and that a bill based on the committee's work will reach the Senate in time for us to deal with it in the light of our experiences. Of course, I do not agree at all with the view of the leader of the opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) that we have not as much right to discuss an elections bill as has any honourable member of another place. We have not only the right but the obligation to discuss a measure of this kind. In that respect there is no real difference between an elections bill and any other bill affecting the welfare of Canada.

The motion was agreed to, and the bill was read the second time.

AGRICULTURAL PRICES SUPPORT BILL

FIRST READING

A message was received from the House of Commons with Bill 392, an Act to amend the Agricultural Prices Support Act, 1944.

The bill was read the first time.

DIVORCE STATISTICS

FINAL REPORT OF COMMITTEE

On the Order:

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for the consideration of the three hundred and twelfth and final report of the Standing Committee on Divorce.—Hon. Mr. Marcotte.

Hon. Mr. MARCOTTE: Honourable senators, I have received the information that I desired, and I do not wish to resume the debate on the committee's report.

The Hon. the SPEAKER: Ordered that the report do lie on the Table.

The Senate adjourned until tomorrow at 3 p.m.