

HOUSE OF COMMONS, ROOM 429.

June 5, 1936.

The Special committee appointed to study the Dominion Elections Act 1934 and the amendments thereto and the Dominion Franchise Act 1934, and amendments thereto, met at 11 a.m., Mr. Bothwell the chairman presided.

The CHAIRMAN: At the last meeting of the committee Mr. Butcher was asked certain questions, and since then he has made further investigation and is prepared to give us the information he has obtained on that investigation this morning.

Mr. HARRY BUTCHER, recalled.

Mr. Chairman, it will be remembered that at page 226 of the evidence I made the statement that the Chief Electoral officer of Australia had informed me that in an election year the cost in that country is approximately £200,000, and in the year in which no election is held the cost is approximately £100,000. At that time Mr. Heaps asked the question as to the value of the Australian pound. I had estimated \$5 to the pound. He said he thought that was incorrect, and in that he was right. I went to the Bank of Montreal and asked them what a thousand pounds of Australian money was worth in Canadian funds on the 29th May, and I was informed that the Australian pound was worth approximately \$4, and not \$5, as I had estimated in the figures I gave to the committee at the last meeting. Therefore in an election year the cost would be \$800,000, and in a year in which no election is held it would be \$400,000; so that if we multiply \$400,000 by three, it would come to \$1,200,000, and one year at \$800,000 would give us, when we combined the two, a cost of \$2,000,000 for the four years. A further question was raised as to whether that sum included the cost of taking the census. I have very carefully read the letter of the Chief Electoral Officer many times since that committee meeting, and I cannot believe that it does include that cost. I shall read again what he said in the letter:—

The Chief Electoral Officer, Commonwealth electoral officers, and divisional returning officers, together with their requisite staffs etc., are permanent officers of the Commonwealth public service, and give their full time to such official duties as are imposed upon them. (These duties include mainly registration of electors and the maintenance of the rolls, conduct of parliamentary and other elections and referanda, taking of census, etc.)

Now, there is no doubt that all these duties are imposed upon the election officers who are permanent, but I cannot get away from what he says in the closing paragraph of his letter, which is as follows:—

It may however serve your purposes to know that the full cost of the Commonwealth Electoral administration (including salaries and all other expenditure involved in the administration of the Commonwealth electoral laws) is approximately as follows.

Now, I have the Commonwealth Electoral laws here and there is no reference whatsoever to the taking of census, so I presume there would be extra costs. But in order to clear that matter up I have already written to the Chief Electoral Officer and asked him if he will give me information upon that point. We shall not receive the reply in time to present to the committee this session.