

the Orders of the Day, there is any reason why the Government should not adopt a similar clause, and introduce it into a Bill introduced by the Government for a general purpose.

Mr. BLAKE. I was not aware that the hon. member for Gaspé was a member of the Government.

Mr. CAMERON. I did not say he was a member of the Government, but I said: 'That if a private member introduced a Bill, that was no reason why the Government should not incorporate a clause similar to the Bill in a Government measure.'

Mr. BLAKE. The Government is not proposing this amendment, it is the hon. member for Gaspé who is moving it.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. He introduced it as a member of the House and not as a member of the Government, and the members of the Government have no greater privileges in that regard than any other member.

Mr. BLAKE. The difficulty that strikes me in reference to the merits of the hon. gentleman's clause is one upon which I would like a little further information before giving it my adhesion. Of course we must all be desirous that the difficulties attending the communication with a portion of the county of Gaspé should be remedied if practicable, and the only question is whether we can remedy them and give adequate securities for the results of the election being properly declared. The difficulty that occurs to me is that of identifying in some way the written communication of a returning officer. The hon. gentleman says there will be no difficulty because candidates can send despatches too, but the candidates' despatches will not be authentic records of what has occurred in the Magdalen Islands. You have further to be assured that the despatch which is written on the other side by the returning officer was really signed by him. There is not that evidence. There is no provision which insures its being the act of the returning officer of the other side which reaches the chief returning officer on this side.

Mr. FORTIN. I think that difficulty is very slight, because the hon. gentleman knows that all the telegraph operators are sworn, and if the proclamation, for instance, is sent by telegraph from Percé round to Meat Cove, and then by cable to the Magdalen Islands, it passes through the hands of people who are sworn. One of the returning officers receives that, and some time afterwards he receives a second copy, and if that copy is a *fac-simile*, then he has got the material proof that it is the proclamation that has been posted at Percé. It is not possible that an election can take place in the county of Gaspé without its being telegraphed by many persons from the Islands to the mainland. Supposing frauds were attempted, the friends of the candidates would have already telegraphed that an election was going to take place, that the proclamation was going to be issued on such a day, and that such a person was to be returning officer. There is no possibility of fraud being practised.

Mr. BLAKE. Perhaps the hon. gentleman would see the possibility if he were to consider the effects of proposing that all the instructions and all the returns by the different returning officers throughout the Dominion might be transmitted by telegraph. It may be true that the telegraph operators are sworn, but the telegraph operator, when he receives a despatch, never enquires if the signature is the genuine signature of the party who transmits it. There is no security that anything which is despatched as the return of the returning officer is really his return.

Mr. FORTIN. The hon. gentleman has forgotten what I said about all the telegrams being repeated, and that where a second copy is found to be the *fac-simile* of the

Mr. CAMERON (Victoria).

first despatch, then it is material proof that it is the genuine despatch. When an election takes place numerous telegrams will be sent from the Magdalen Islands to the mainland, and there will be no chance of fraud being necessarily practised. Moreover, nothing can be gained by fraud. I bring in this Bill in order to give those people a chance to exercise their rights as Canadian voters. I have a special reason for that because the elections in the Magdalen Islands take place after the others on account of the difficulty in reaching them in winter. There is a maximum time and a minimum time, and the Government would consult their own interests in choosing either one or the other. In 1878 I would have come forward for the Local House to defeat for the third time the candidate who opposed me in the Local House, but how could I do it? The Government at Quebec, instead of choosing the maximum time so as to give a chance to these people to vote, they chose the minimum time to exclude these voters, and therefore I did not come forward. In the fall I came forward for the Federal House, and the Government chose the maximum time so as to have the election in the winter in order to disqualify the Magdalen Islands people again. But they could not do it because the maximum time was not long enough. But the voting took place during a storm and I lost about 400 votes, though I still had 900 of a majority.

Mr. BLAKE. The hon. gentleman has not answered the difficulty at all, but he has supplied a very important reason why another portion of his clause should not pass in its present shape. The hon. gentleman has told the House that when discretionary power was in the hands of the Government, it was improperly used, and his late opponent, Mr. Flynn, secured election in Gaspé. The proposal, however, was to place the whole details in the hands of the Government. If it is intended to announce the result of the polls by telegraph it should be surrounded by many precautions. The repetition of the telegram is no security of the correctness of the measure, and among the other safeguards there should be one for identifying the returning officer who sends the telegram.

Mr. FORTIN. The Government will have no discretion. The voting at Magdalen Islands will take place at the same time as on the mainland. The arrangements for voting will be so closely watched that fraud will be impossible. If fraud should take place, nothing would be gained because the ballot boxes would be forwarded as soon as navigation opened.

Mr. BLAKE. If we are going to accept returns by telegraph, the arrangements should be surrounded with every precaution, and these should be determined by Parliament and not by the Governor in Council.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I think we had better accept for the present an amendment providing that a return shall also be made in the same way as other returns, and that in the case where the telegraphic return varies from the written one the latter shall be accepted. Before the Bill comes to the third reading I shall have the amendment drafted in proper form, providing that the return shall be forwarded to the Clerk to be dealt with by the House in case there is a variation.

On clause 6,

Mr. BLAKE. Why is this change made?

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. The reason the change is made is that in the first place the returning officers provided for by the present law are not in any way the servants or officers of the Dominion, but the servants and officers of the Provinces. They are in no way under the control of the Dominion Parliament, except that they may be brought to the Bar of the House and punished for misdemeanors. They are not obliged to perform this duty; they can refuse