

immediate election. If there is one right above another which the people's representatives should at all times have, it is that of declaring at any moment and at all times that a ministry no longer enjoys the confidence of the country and that an immediate dissolution of parliament is necessary in order that an immediate general election may be held. If there is one right above another which the people of Canada should enjoy it is to have available at all times the machinery that is necessary for the immediate conduct of a general election.

Well, what did we receive in answer the other day from the Secretary of State (Mr. Cahan) to the question I asked as to the date by which we could expect to have the lists printed?

As hon. members will recall, at the last session the old Dominion Elections Act was repealed. That act had served for many years wholly satisfactorily, and there was no demand for its repeal; at any rate there should have been no final repeal of the act until the machinery under the new measure was in such shape as to make it possible to have an immediate election at any time.

Mr. CAHAN: Did you ever suggest that during the discussion?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I say to the Secretary of State that I am not the government; I am not responsible for the government's legislation. Over and over again I have been told that by the Prime Minister. What I did ask was, whether we might expect to be able to hold a general election at any time the country might desire it. More than that, as leader of the official opposition I put faith, as I was obliged to do, in what was told me and told this house by the minister of the crown who on behalf of the government brought in the new elections act and franchise act. I accepted his word, as it was my duty to do, when he introduced the new measures. And what did he say? The statements are very clear. I have in my hand the Hansard of June 13, 1934, and at page 4257 the Minister of Justice (Mr. Guthrie) said:

It has been thought by the government that it would be well to devise some improved method to bring on a general or by-election in this country in much less time than is necessary at present.

There was the motive alleged for that act, to have the machinery, an improved method, to bring on a general or by-election in this country in less time than was necessary under the old Dominion Elections Act. That was the whole purpose of it, we were told. The

minister went on to speak of completing the voters' lists, which he said "shall be available at a moment's notice in any part of Canada should a general election or a by-election take place." Express provision was made that the by-elections would continue to be held under the old elections act, but we were told when this new measure was introduced that we would have a measure which would enable elections to be brought on more speedily—brought on, to give the minister's own words "in much less time than is necessary at present"—referring to the situation as in June, 1934, and "at a moment's notice in any part of Canada." As to the availability of the lists, at a moment's notice in any part of Canada the lists were to be available when necessary for a general election.

Mr. CAHAN: That is exactly what you will have. May I say to the right hon. gentleman, if he will allow me to interrupt—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No, my hon. friend may speak in the course of the debate. I have here what my hon. friend (Mr. Cahan) gave me as an answer the other day, and I am going to do him the courtesy of reading it in just a moment. But what else did the Minister of Justice say in introducing the new elections act last year?—"that a basic list shall be undertaken immediately after the prorogation of the present parliament." It was not undertaken immediately, as I shall show in a moment. Those are the statements that were made by the Minister of Justice at the time of introducing the bill last year.

Now what had my hon. friend the Secretary of State to say when I asked him whether the lists had been printed, that were to be available at any moment the country might want to have a general election, and that were, if necessary, to enable an election to be held more quickly than formerly? My hon. friend said at page 5 of Hansard of this year, referring to the Dominion Franchise Act of last year:

The dominion franchise commissioner commenced on November 20 last to deliver to the king's printer copies of the lists of electors for the several electoral districts of Canada as they were severally prepared, with directions to the king's printer for the printing of the same.

These lists comprise approximately 6,000,000 names of electors, of which about 1,000,000 names are now set up in type, although the printing of departmental reports, in English and French, for presentation to parliament, has been given precedence over other work. The printing bureau, in addition to its other work, is now setting up in type about 75,000 names per day, so that in the ordinary course, without grave accidents to the equipment of the bureau,