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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTION LAW.

"We must not make a scarecrow of the law,
Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
And let it keep one shape, till custom make it
Their perch and not their terror."

—*Measure for Measure.*

The existing law for the suppression of corrupt practices at federal elections requires considerable alteration in order to make it effective. Mr. Charlton brought forward a bill in the House of Commons two years ago containing provisions enlarging the scope of the present law and subsequently a special Committee of the House was appointed to consider the whole subject. The Committee was in favor of adopting some of the provisions of the proposed measure, but owing to the great volume of other business before parliament no further progress was made towards amending the law.

The amendments proposed were commendable in declaring as corrupt practices certain improper actions which were not covered by the present statute, but the most serious defect in the present law is left untouched by any of them.

In the opinion of the present writer the main cause for the unsatisfactory operation of the Controverted Elections Act is that enforcement of its leading provisions is largely in the hands of parties who may be and often are as guilty as those against whom proceedings are instituted. The statute as manipulated by the agents of petitioners and respondents conceals rather than reveals the crimes it was framed to punish. A vigorous and uncompromising enforcement of the law cannot be secured when one whose duty it is to prosecute and furnish evidence is in *pari delicto* and likely to be embarrassed by counter-proceedings. The natural consequence is that soon after election petitions are filed by each party there are the usual dip-