

up to perhaps a day or two before the election we cannot get the necessary information from the officers in regard to where the voters shall vote. Under this provision the returning officer will subdivide the district within a few days of polling day, and one-half the people of that district will not know where to vote. In a sparsely settled district, perhaps ten miles in length and seven or eight miles in depth, the people will not know where to vote, and it will cause great inconvenience.

Mr. BENNETT. Should not this proviso be added: That in this alphabetical distribution of the lists, it should be provided that there shall be under each of the subdivisions at least 350 names on the list. It is quite possible to poll 300 votes in a division, and I know it is done in our riding. The reason of that is quite plain. If it were left to the discretion of every returning officer to allot the polling divisions as he pleases, there would be no end of expense, because one returning officer might have the idea that there should be only 100 names in a polling division, and another might think there should be 400.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. I would like to point out to my hon. friend, that, by this Act, we are adopting the polling subdivisions fixed by the local legislature. The difficulty suggested here arises from the law of the province of New Brunswick. There, the whole province is divided into subdistricts by the statute, not by the returning officer. The result is, that there may be as many as 500, 600 or 700 voters in one district. By the local law it is provided that, when the number of voters on the list in one polling subdistrict exceeds 400, it shall be lawful for the returning officer to provide two polling boxes in such subdistrict; so that, though all the electors may come to one central spot to vote, the returning officer shall have two boxes where the number of votes exceeds 400.

Mr. GILLIES. In fact, two separate booths at the one place.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Yes, or both boxes may be in one booth. The intention is, that under the federal law, where a polling subdivision is created by the provincial law in which the number of voters exceeds 250, there shall be a separate polling booth or a separate box for each 250 voters.

Mr. BENNETT. That is the point I was calling attention to—that 250 names in one polling division is too small a number, because it is possible to poll 300 votes in one division; and I suggest that the number of names should not be less than 350.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. As I know nothing of the local conditions in New Brunswick, I cannot say whether there would be any objection to fixing the number at 350 or not. At first sight, I do not

Mr. McDougall.

see that there would be any objection. In the Dominion Franchise Act the number is put at 300.

Mr. FOSTER. For subdivision territorially.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Yes, but in the way that I read the Act, there would not be more than 200 votes.

Mr. LARIVIERE. This may be all right for the provinces where the density of the population will permit such an arrangement, and in the cities and towns, where the alphabetical lists can be used. But in the western provinces, where the population is sparse, it would not work at all. In fact, in such cases, I believe there should be a proviso for a poll to be held in certain places where the number of voters would not reach 300 or 250. We have in Manitoba and the North-west small settlements at great distances from the towns, and it would be unfair to expect those people to travel 50, 60 or 80 miles, as the case might be, sometimes where there are no roads at all, to reach the polling place to record their votes. I hope the Solicitor General will see his way to insert a proviso, that, where a settlement would be so small and so far from the polling place, a poll might be held at a more central point. The Minister of the Interior knows that there are settlements along our northern lakes in Manitoba—Lake Winnipeg, Lake Dauphin, Lake Manitoba and Shoal Lake—where there are not more than 50, 60 or perhaps 100 votes. These people would be compelled to go to the more thickly settled portions of the province to record their votes, because they are not sufficiently numerous to have a polling division by themselves. I would, therefore, ask that in Manitoba, and perhaps the Territories as well, the subdivisions be made, not alphabetically, but according to the territory, and that in special cases distance should be taken into consideration, in order to facilitate the voters in small settlements recording their votes.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Has my hon. friend had his attention called to subsection "e" of section 5?

Mr. McDougall. I would like to ask the hon. Solicitor General's opinion with respect to districts that are less than 200 or less than 150. What would he propose to do under this Act? Suppose there were two districts sparsely settled, in which there are only perhaps 100 or 150 voters, what are we to do in that case?

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. It is only in the case of such an emergency as that which the hon. member for Kent has pointed out, that this section will be put into operation.

Mr. McINERNEY. What I protest against is, not so much the proposed meeting of the difficulty, because about the only way in which it can be met is that which my hon.