

Mr. McPHEE: Could it not be clarified? I can quite understand that some deputy returning officer might frighten a proposed deponent.

Mr. FACTOR: Under the provisions of the act an illiterate person may take an open ballot. He does not have to mark the ballot; the returning officer marks it for him. If he is compelled even to make a mark there may be some difficulty in registering his vote.

Mr. POULIOT: There is the same thing about the blind. But very few will be blind about the next election.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): Add the words "or mark" after the word "signature."

Mr. BENNETT: You could not say it is his usual handwriting.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Is this the only case where a written affidavit is required? Usually when a voter is challenged he takes the oath but does not sign anything.

Mr. BENNETT: It is to prevent the fraud that arises by reason of that. There is no sanction to it at all. Impersonators have taken the affidavit by hundreds.

Mr. LAPOINTE: If many electors are challenged in that way and they have to make written affidavits, I am afraid a number of electors will not be able to register their vote because of lack of time. It often happens, it did in my own constituency in the last election, that in the afternoon people are waiting to vote, and there were many challenged votes and we were afraid that a number would not have time to vote. If this is taken advantage of by some representatives of candidates and every voter is required to have an affidavit prepared and sign it, or affix his mark if he is not able to sign, I am afraid there will be a blockade at the door of certain polls. I do not think this has been sufficiently considered.

Mr. POULIOT: Not only that; the distribution of polls has been most absurd. In my constituency there are polls with fifty voters and others with four hundred. If the deputy returning officer takes advantage of that clause to impose an oath on every voter it will be impossible for all on the list to vote. Elections might be stolen with that provision. I strongly protest against it; it should be drafted differently. It has been in the oven long enough to be drafted properly.

Mr. FACTOR: Section 38 of the election act provides that if a man's name is on the voters' list he is entitled to vote. I quite agree that if there is impersonation it ought

to be checked, but the proper way would be to administer the oath in the most expeditious way possible. Having this long form, and the returning officer having to have it signed by the elector, will clog up the polling booths and deprive a great number of voters of the right to vote. This is a long form; it will have to be read over—

Mr. GUTHRIE: It is the same form; it will have to be read anyway—the only thing that will take time is the signing of the name. The returning officer has to sign under the present law. There are only three hundred voters on the list for any polling subdivision.

Mr. FACTOR: But the former oath was much shorter; there was nothing about its being in the usual handwriting.

Mr. GUTHRIE: It is the same oath except that last line:

That the signature which I have made to this deposition is in my usual handwriting, and is my true name.

Mr. FACTOR: Is clause 4, about the occupation, in the present oath?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Was this particular form in the bill that was presented to the house a year ago?

Mr. GUTHRIE: I do not think so.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My recollection is that there was some similar form, if not this one, and that strong exception was taken, particularly by the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. St-Père), on the ground taken this evening, that it might lead to polls becoming jammed on account of the length of time it would take to sign these forms.

Mr. GRAY: As the hon. member for Toronto West Centre (Mr. Factor) has pointed out, under the Dominion Elections Act if a man's name is on the list he is entitled to vote. Here again, under section 3 we compel him to say that he is ordinarily a resident and to repeat all the qualifications which were required when he was placed on the list by the registrar. It seems to me that there are many superfluous sections in this affidavit, and I believe it might well be reconsidered.

Mr. GUTHRIE: Let us read the present oath, which appears as form No. 20 of the act of last year:

You swear that you verily believe that you are the person intended to be referred to by the entry in the list of voters for this polling division of the name of whose occupation is given as and whose address is given as So help you God.

The blanks have to be filled in.