

Section 21 has an amendment.

Mr. CASTONGUAY: Section 21 is not in the mimeographed amendment; it is a suggestion I want to make to the committee.

This new subsection (IA) of section 36, provides that the deputy returning officer, before the opening of the poll on polling day, is to initial all the ballot papers that he has received from the returning officer.

I have discussed this matter with some of the returning officers and one of them tells me that it might cause difficulties because the deputy returning officer very seldom reaches his polling station very many minutes before the opening of the poll, and it might be very inconvenient for him if he were required to initial, let us say, three or four hundred ballot papers before actual voting took place. So I would suggest that subsection (IA) of section 36, be changed to read as follows: it is only the first line that needs to be changed; instead of "before the opening of the poll", is might be amended to read:

As soon as possible before or after the opening of the poll.

Mr. MACNICOL: That would be all right.

Mr. CASTONGUAY: And this would permit the deputy returning officer to initial the ballot papers as soon as possible on polling day.

The CHAIRMAN: Then it should read "before or as soon as possible after"; because, if you say: "as soon as possible before", he would be doing it as soon as he got his ballots.

Mr. CASTONGUAY: Yes.

Mr. BERTRAND: Do you mean to say that he could accept a few persons to vote, and then could initial the other ballots?

Mr. CASTONGUAY: Yes; it would mean that the deputy returning officer would be required to initial the ballots as soon as possible after the opening of the poll, if he did not have time to initial them before.

The CHAIRMAN: Then you will be actually robbing the section of the intent of the committee, who decided on it last year, because you will have every deputy returning officer coming to the poll at, let us say, one minute to eight o'clock or ten minutes to eight o'clock and they may see a member of the public and they will say: I guess we will have to go and give him a ballot; and thereafter, for the rest of the day, he would be just catching up, one ballot at a time, with his initialling. I think there should be a combined initialling of all the ballots, such as the committee desired last year.

Mr. CASTONGUAY: It might take 15 to 20 minutes.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there any reason why your deputy returning officer should not be there at eight o'clock?

Mr. BERTRAND: It might take longer than that, because, in many instances—we know of some of these people who are well-qualified, but not so very well-used to the pen, and it would take them quite a while to initial 300 or 400 ballots.

Mr. McLURE: There is no reason why the deputy returning officer should not be there in plenty of time to initial all those papers. They open the polls and they are paid officials and they should be there; and the object for having all these ballots initialled is that of secrecy of the poll. If you give them the leeway you are proposing now, they can go on and initial, as time permits. You would not be overcoming the object that you are after, namely, the secrecy of the vote, of how a man votes.

The CHAIRMAN: That is my impression, Mr. McLure, but I would leave it to the committee.

Mr. LOCKHART: Is it not better to safeguard the ninety-nine rather than to make a lot of exceptions for number one?