

Act of Parliament. The American authorities all, so far as known, confirm this principle, some, however, requiring that the change, to be valid, must be in pursuance of an honest purpose, and not patently fraudulent; and others holding that where a statute exists, it defines, limits and even supplants the common law right. In this view, it is apparent that a statute drawn with a view to protect both public and private interests as these exist today among civilized communities, is essential to meet the case; since the free right granted by the Common Law is totally unfitted to conditions imposed by modern commercial life.

It is quite unnecessary to state that a right which could safely be permitted to be exercised by the subject in the time of Queen Elizabeth, might prove harmful or even disastrous to public interests if permitted today. The vast and complicated system of statute law, amending the common law in thousands of particulars, and being in turn itself almost daily subjected to amendment, proves how law changes and must always change to meet the requirements of each age and generation. The interests of society today demand that there shall be both certainty and, within certain clearly defined limits, permanency in the name of a citizen in order to fix his identity. To permit such change, as the ancient Common Law did, at the mere whim and fancy of the bearer—a change which could, if desired, be repeated once each month, and was entirely without written record—would disarrange the whole machinery of the modern business world. To the trader of today, an exact and permanent name is as essential as to a corporation. Without public confidence in its permanency commerce could not be carried on.

Police officials are well aware that gangs of criminals, known as confidence thieves, have operated for years throughout the United States, and generally successfully, by adopting the simple expedient of a complete new set of names together with a radical change of base for each new exploit. Among a population of one hundred millions, spread over a vast territory, this is not difficult. One favorite method is for a firm, calling themselves A., B. & C., to settle in a small town as newcomers, open, perhaps, a clothing store, and deposit a substantial sum in cash with the local bank.