

It is not my purpose to discuss the question whether he did that with or without reason, but we are not taking away that right, and it will merely mean that the person who takes an oath will do it in a form of which there will be a permanent record. If this legislation is passed, I do not believe it would be brought into practical application to any extent in more than a dozen constituencies, and it will give an assurance of an honest vote. I cannot and will not assume that hon. gentlemen in whatever section of the house they sit are less interested in that result than are those who are bringing forward this bill.

Mr. BAKER: The hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay (Mr. Casgrain) mentioned the blocking of the poll. He will admit that impersonations will be in the morning because if the impersonator does not arrive in the morning, the opportunity for impersonation will be lost, so his point there is very weak.

Mr. McPHEE: In country polls the deputy returning officer will not know anything about the legal effect of a signature, and I would suggest that the Minister of Justice should insert an alternative:

That I am unable to write and have hereto made my mark and that _____ is my true name.

That will cover the difficulty.

Mr. GUTHRIE: I am trying to draft a clause to carry out that suggestion.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Also there will be nothing to prevent challenging the voter under another section of the act, and he will have to take another oath on form 19 in which he will be required to swear again that he is a British subject, twenty-one years of age, that he has not voted before at this election, has not been employed by any person for pay or reward in reference to this election and has not been promised anything directly or indirectly to induce him to vote. There will be two sets of oaths that may be required from any voter, one he will have to sign in the form of an affidavit, for the other the usual oath will serve the purpose.

Mr. DUPRE: They do not serve the same purpose.

Mr. LAPOINTE: No, but they both take time. It is not such an easy thing as some hon. gentlemen claim, and I have had some experience in elections. It takes time to swear voters, especially if someone wants time to be taken, they will insist on having the two oaths forced on the elector who applies to vote, and one of them will have to be signed.

There are many people, old ladies and old labouring people who do not like to take affidavits and sign their names just for the purpose of voting.

Mr. HACKETT: They are not impersonators.

Mr. GAGNON: The honest voter is never afraid to sign his name.

Mr. LAPOINTE: It is all very well for my hon. friend to say that, he has not had the experience, let me tell him. I know people who have refused to swear although they were the most honest in the world, they do not like it. There are people—we may think it is a mistake of conscience but there are those who think it is a bad thing to take an oath, they are afraid to take an oath under any circumstances, and I think forcing them to do that for the purpose of registering their vote will cause some of them to decline to exercise their right or fulfil the duty of registering their vote at any election. You will not serve any purpose by doing this but you will prevent some honest voters from voting. It is useless to say we want to have clean elections, I do not think anyone will charge me with having any other intention in mind. Anything that will lead to honest elections I will support as strongly as anyone, but I do not believe this is the right way of doing it. I think this will rather hit people who are not the fraudulent persons whom it is intended to prevent doing their evil work.

An hon. MEMBER: You are wrong.

Mr. LAPOINTE: An hon. member says I am wrong. I know when I was representing a rural sitting in Kamouraska this thing would not apply there at all, but let those who are carrying on elections in cities and know something about the conditions say what their experience is in that regard.

Mr. MANION: There are more from cities on this side.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Let me tell my hon. friend many of his electors will not like this provision, and he will agree that I was not wrong in the fight I am making to-day.

Mr. POWER: Before this passes I would like to make a few observations. I entirely agree with my hon. friend from Quebec East (Mr. Lapointe). It will be quite possible for any evil-minded scrutineer to block any of the large city polls in the city of Quebec, let alone in Montreal, without the assistance of the deputy returning officer; a scrutineer who intends to win for his candidate by fair means