

## SECOND SITTING.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

Routine proceedings.

## ELECTION LAW AMENDMENT BILL.

## SECOND READING.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT moved the second reading of Bill (115) An Act to amend the Dominion Elections Act.'

He said: The first and the more important clauses of this Bill relate to the preparation of a list in what are known as the unorganized districts of Ontario. Under the Franchise Act, as it stood in 1897, the Governor in Council was authorized to appoint enumerators to prepare a list in those districts where the lists were not prepared annually. The lists all over the Dominion, wherever they were prepared by the municipal authorities, were always accepted. They were transmitted to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery and printed at Ottawa, and were the lists used in the general election. There were, however, certain districts the number of which is diminishing but it so happened a number of districts north and west of Lake Superior are not organized. There were no voters' lists, and, consequently, in the elections that have been held for many years before the change of government took place, lists had to be prepared in those unorganized districts and the ordinary procedure was, after the lists were prepared, provision was made that a judge should hold court and the lists were revised by the judge. Applications to strike off or add names were admitted. The Act contained a clause, however, that if there was a list that list should be taken. Hon. gentlemen who followed the history of events in Ontario in May, June and July last, will have noticed that at the end of the session held in the local legislature at Toronto an Act was passed authorizing the lieutenant governor to have lists prepared. The time was short, because the elections were to be held on the same day all over Ontario, and, consequently, a time that was considered not long enough for the preparation of those lists was given, and also the time

Hon. Mr. ELLIS.

was shortened within which the judge must revise the lists. It was represented that this had acted very unfairly. Naturally when the federal government appointed enumerators, they appointed friends. When the government of Ontario appointed enumerators in those districts they naturally appointed their own friends. We know very well how easy it is to influence even the most honourable men where politics enter and it was alleged, and pretty strongly supported by proof, that those lists were not fairly made up, that they were partial, that the Liberal party had not an opportunity to be represented, that the revision by the judge was hastily carried on, and various accusations of that kind. I am not going to say whether those accusations were true or not, because I would not be safe in making any statement. The lists may have been fairly and justly framed and submitted to the judge, and he may have carried out his mission; but where lists are prepared by one political party if any friendly aid can be given in the preparation and in the revision of the list, it is pretty well recognized the party in power take advantage of those opportunities.

It was alleged in the House of Commons, as I have said, that the lists were unfairly prepared, and a battle royal has been going on for several months in the other House on that question. I will admit that the provisions for the preparation of the lists as laid down in the Bill as first introduced in the House of Commons may have been considered unfair to a certain extent; consequently complaint was entered that the existing lists were prepared by a government adverse to the present government—by the Conservative party. If the opposite side, the Liberal party, were to prepare a list in which their own supporters were to have a prominent interest, then it would be only fair to say they might be considered partial, also. To avoid that, the government decided that they would depart from the principle that had so long prevailed, and they enacted this clause:

2. For the purpose of preparing, revising and giving effect to such voters' lists there shall be a board of registration for each electoral district which is composed wholly or partly of such territory not municipally organized.