

would be some reason for appointing registrars in rural as well as in urban districts, but where the law provides, as the Bill now does, that in certain provinces where there are provincial lists they are to be made the basis of the lists for federal purposes, the need of any registrars to supplement those lists or to strike names off is wholly unnecessary. That being so, I propose to submit to the House an amendment to the effect that in rural districts where the provincial lists are used as the basis of the lists for federal elections, registrars shall not be appointed, but that persons whose names do not appear on the provincial lists may either go before one of the revising officers in an adjoining urban division and have their names placed upon the lists by the court of revision which may be held at such place, or, if they prefer so to do, may wait until the day of election and go to the poll accompanied by some person resident in the polling subdivision and exercise their right to cast their ballots upon taking the oath. If that course is adopted it should be the means of saving to the country hundreds of thousands of dollars in the administration of the Act. It should also be the means of avoiding the necessity of appointing a whole army of enumerators in those provinces where the work of preparing the lists is already virtually complete. It is obviously desirable in connection with election lists that if possible there should be about them something in the nature of finality. When provincial lists have been prepared and are available to all who care to see them there is this element of finality. Electors can look at the lists and if their names are not on them they will know that if entitled to vote they can on the day of election go to the poll and take the oath and vote, or that before the election day they can appear in an adjoining urban municipality where a judicial officer is revising the roll and have their names added. This means no doubt on the part of the elector as to whether or not his name is or is not on the list for the purpose of voting. But the Government proposes, notwithstanding, to appoint in rural divisions enumerators to revise these lists that have already been prepared by the provinces. That means that these rural registrars may, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, take from those lists or add to them as they think best. Giving that power to a group of appointees of the Government for that particular time and purpose will simply create confusion in the minds of the elec-

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

tors, who will not know until practically the day of polling comes whether or not an enumerator has erased a name or has added it. I feel, therefore, if we can effect economy in the administration of the Act and inspire greater certainty in the mind of the electorate in regard to election machinery, at the same time removing the possibility of abuse through Government patronage, we shall be helping to make the Act more acceptable to the people of the Dominion. I can see no reason whatever why the Government should wish to have this power of appointing a lot of superfluous registrars or enumerators, unless it is to influence a body of men at election time by the use of a little patronage, which may mean little in outlay to individuals, but which, when extended to a large number of persons, will represent a considerable sum in the ultimate expenses of elections.

Let me indicate to the House what this business of enumeration has cost the country. One can only arrive at the cost approximately, but I think the figures I have will roughly suggest what it is we aim at in seeking to effect this economy where there is absolute safety in so doing. In a statement brought down by the Minister of Finance (Sir Henry Drayton) on March 22, figures were given as to the cost of previous general elections in Canada, and I will give to the House the totals for the years then recorded. The House will see from these figures how very much more expensive the election of 1917 was than any previous election, and I shall show, after I have quoted these figures as a whole, wherein the additional expense for 1917 is almost exclusively chargeable to the system of enumeration which was adopted in that election, in place of the system that had been formerly followed of using provincial lists where they were available. In 1896 the general elections cost \$197,000—I will not give the odd figures—in 1900, \$232,000; in 1904, \$307,000; in 1908, \$391,000; in 1911, \$507,000; in 1919, \$1,678,000. There is an increase over the previous election of \$1,170,000 in the last election, which was carried on under the enumerating system. My hon. friends opposite will say that this sum included the expense of taking the vote overseas. It did, but the Auditor General's report contains the figures as to that cost, and a return was made to Parliament showing the various items in connection with the election of 1917 from which I quote. In 1911, the cost of the general election was \$507,353.55. The election for