

fluence have been so gross, so unconcealed that the independent press of this country has launched its vigorous opposition against it, and thinking men all over the country are condemning it more and more. Yet where is the clause in this Bill that applies to that? Then, Sir, there are no adequate penalties for certain election crimes such as have been shown to exist through the action of the courts within the last year or two. And, more than that, there is no effective power to carry the election law into effect, so that these crimes declared to be crimes by the law shall be exposed and the evil-doers punished.

I have said that there are two or three satisfactory technical amendments. But one change that is made seems to allow a method of legal corruption. The Bill—whatever may be meant by it—authorizes incorporated companies for political purposes only to distribute alms without incurring the penalties of the law. There is a vista opening before us; there is a provision of wonderful possibilities. We have no explanation of it from any hon. gentleman who has spoken on the side of the government. We do not know what it means, but it seems to be a peculiar proposition and one that may lead to great abuses. Then we have in this Bill an attack upon the secrecy of the ballot. After seven days' debate, after the clause had been attacked right and left, the first light that we are given upon it is the statement made by the Prime Minister that his Minister of Justice did not mean what the clause says; that is what the right hon. gentleman's statement amounts to. And he says the Minister of Justice has been very unfairly criticised in the statement that this means a departure from the secrecy of the ballot. The section says :

Provided, however, that no ballot paper shall be rejected on account of any writings, number or mark placed thereon by any deputy returning officer.

That is as wide as it can be made. It covers any kind of combination or series of combination. It opens the way for the purchase of votes, because it provides a method by which the vote can be identified. Any deputy returning officer of the calibre of hundreds of deputy returning officers of whom we have had experience in this country could, under that plenary power, make it possible for the party that he stands in with—and he is a partisan appointee—to make their negotiations upon the basis of absolute certainty and to have the ballots marked so that they can be absolutely identified and that payment can be arranged for with absolute certainty that it can be known whether the goods are or are not delivered. The very fact that this provision is in the Bill will raise fear in the mind of every dependent, of every poor man who would rather conceal the way in

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which he votes, the man who labours for a corporation or for a master who would try to influence his vote—that there is no use, that it is impossible for him to escape, that his ballot will be identified and the way in which he votes will become known. That is the first thing. But the second thing is what I have spoken of, that it opens an organized, trustworthy and certain method of clinching the wrongful negotiations that take place for the purchase and sale of votes.

My right hon. friend says that the minister has been unduly criticised. What criticism could there be? The minister himself never opened his mouth upon it, he did not explain it, his explanation is in the clause and the clause, I have read. What we suppose is that the clause means what it says, and if it means what it says it certainly is open to criticism of the most stringent and vehement kind. The Bill does something else, it provides for a partisan division of electors in divided polling subdivisions. That remark is absolutely true as far as the Bill goes, as far as the arguments to support the Bill up to this date go, because every gentleman who has spoken on that side has gone upon the Bill and has approved of the Bill, the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill. To-day my right hon. friend says that he will delete partisanship entirely from the redistribution of voters and will have the redistribution conducted entirely by county court judges. That is not the Bill, but why did the right hon. gentleman, if that was the intention of the Bill or his intention, waste the time of this House for seven long days, keep back the business of the country at this late time of the session, imperil the wages of working men and civil servants all through this country and then, at this late day, announce that he has agreed to delete partisanship from that portion of it? We agree absolutely in this, that if it is necessary, as it is, to have overlapping polling subdivisions distributed—I agree to that, we all agree to that—any reasonable legislation which is non-partisan and competent legislation will receive the support of this side of the House so far as that delimitation is concerned. My hon. friend who leads the government said that on Tuesday last.

Mr. BERGERON. Who leads the opposition?

Mr. FOSTER. The government soon to be—stated that in explicit language and yet for these whole eight days the debate has gone on and it is only at this late moment that the right hon. gentleman concedes the point. We agree to accept the concession. It was our principle laid down at the first and we congratulate the right hon. gentleman on acceding to the justice and reasonableness of the demand which has been made in that respect.