

*Elections Act*

I must congratulate the former Solicitor General upon his consistency. He took the ground some years ago that the amendment we proposed was inimical to the interests of the country, and he still thinks that, although he believes the reasons are not now as pointed as they were then. He has suffered a great deal within the past few months, and one would imagine that suffering and tribulation would cause him to think of the sins he committed in the past, but like the person about whom the poet wrote his "head is bloody, but unbowed". He is very much like the ancient Bourbon dynasty, who never learnt and never forgot. I think we ought to be under a debt of gratitude to the Government for having acquired for us this very large body of women voters in December, 1921. It has been said, and I agree with the statement, that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male." The government learnt that to their sorrow on the 6th of December last. When this question came up in 1919 and 1920 my hon. friend from North Waterloo (Mr. Euler) and myself were voices in the wilderness in the matter of pleading for the enfranchisement of women, and I remember my good friend the ex-Solicitor General telling us that the reason why these foreign-born women were put on an inferior plane, and a plane different from that of women born on this continent, was because the standard of living and morality among women born in Europe was somewhat different from the standard on this continent. He tried to circulate the myth that these foreign-born women all came from alien-enemy countries, and I suppose that nine out of every ten people who read the newspapers were of the opinion that this section in the act was merely intended to prevent German and Austrian women from exercising the franchise. The public mind had not cooled off at that time to the extent it has now and the feeling was that perhaps such women should not be permitted to settle the fate of the government in power. My hon. friend should have created the impression that the law applied to every class of women born in Europe, to French women, Belgian women, Italian women, and people of that kind, all of whom showed what they were capable of doing during the war. Every foreign-born woman from Europe was disfranchised by this act for the reason given by the former Solicitor General, that their standard of living and morality was different

[Mr. Jacobs.]

from that of the women born on this continent. I want to say that standards of living and morality are not governed by the country in which a person lives, but by something entirely different, and when we took the ground that all women should have the right to vote if British subjects, that applied to every class and character of women, no matter from what country she hailed. If they were British subjects by the fact of their husband's naturalization, and had all the rights and privileges of British subjects as such, they ought to have had the right of voting, which is one of the most important and essential rights given to British subjects in this country. We now have fallen on more pleasant days; I think that even our friends among the official Opposition will soon look at things in a very different light from that which they do now—I hope they will at any rate. But whether they do or not, my hon. friend from North Waterloo and myself will still continue to agitate for the repeal of this obnoxious law; and even if a measure of that kind is introduced into this House and fails to obtain the necessary majority in the other Chamber we will continue until this right is obtained for these women no matter from what country they come.

I would like my hon. friend (Mr. Guthrie) to note—it may be a matter of sorrow to him—that the former Minister of Marine and Fisheries in the old government, Hon. Mr. Ballantyne, owes his defeat very largely to the fact that this section of the law was engrafted on our Franchise Act. Mr. Ballantyne has publicly declared on many occasions that the women in the district in which he lived, the foreign born women, voted against him. How could he expect otherwise? One would almost have imagined that the late government wishing to rid themselves of the former Minister of Marine and Fisheries and throw him overboard—if I may so use the expression—just tacked on this provision in order that he might be left behind. I think I ought to state that perhaps there were other and sufficing reasons why he was left behind. Still it may be, as I say, of interest to the hon. gentleman to know that practically every woman of foreign birth in the St. Lawrence-St. George division—and there were about three thousand of them—voted en masse for the present member of that constituency (Mr. Marler) to show their detestation of the government which could stoop to such methods as the last government did in order to disfranchise them.