

*Elections Act*

and the culprits who are paid to do such a wicked job, I think we will, especially in the large cities, affect the vote of good, honest people, who will not like this form of making an affidavit in the way it is proposed to be done under this amendment. As regards the contention of the hon. member for Quebec West (Mr. Power), his experience is good, but to my mind it is not as good before the committee and the house as that of that of members like the hon. member for Quebec East, the hon. member for St. James and myself who have run elections for many years. He ought to know that in big cities like Quebec, Montreal and others outside our province people come into the polling stations at the last hour, as the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. St-Père) has said. If at the time the representative of any given candidate knows his polling division is a Liberal stronghold, or for that matter a Conservative stronghold, because the thing works both ways, and if he wants to be strong for his candidate, he may challenge the vote of any person who comes in there.

I want to draw the attention of the committee to the fact that not only has this been done in cities, but in my own county in a rural district, because some person had been away for a certain time and had been put on the list, everyone who came to the poll was challenged. This was done even in rural or semi-rural divisions. There is a danger that might obtain if this form of affidavit is used. We have the present form whereby a man coming in may be attested and forced to take the oath. He takes the oath and it is marked that he is sworn. If he takes the oath, he is given a ballot because he is on the list. This proceeding we are taking to-day is the last, third degree test after the revision and the main basic lists have been made. It has only one purpose, namely, to make the election more difficult, and to try to keep away from the polls as many people as possible.

Mr. DUPRE: That is absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. CASGRAIN: The franchise is in the air; a person has to go and grab it and see that his name is on the list. Formerly every person was on the list and was not bound to under the special circumstances in this case

As the hon. member for Hochelaga has said, what guarantee have we that we have caught the impersonator? The man who is bad, who is the culprit, who is asked to do a wicked job, will be requested to make an affidavit and to subscribe his name. He will subscribe the name of the person he wants to impersonate. We have not his signature; we do not know who he is; we have not his address. We have

[Mr. Casgrain.]

to grab him on the spot. If he takes the affidavit, impersonates the man and we give him the ballot, he takes it and goes free. What guarantee have we that we can reach that man? We cannot reach him at all, and I doubt whether this amendment will serve the purpose it is intended to serve. If this affidavit were made in the form of an oath to be taken, but not to force the person who would be called upon to subscribe to the oath, to put his signature to it, I would not object to that so much. But to force a person to sign, I think, with the mentality of the people in our province—and I think the same is true in all the provinces—it is an insult to the labourers, the employees, the honest working-man who come to the polls, to be forced at the wish of a representative there to put his signature to a document or, if he does not know how to sign, to put his mark. I repeat that we have no guarantee that we will be able to get the wicked man who wants to deprive the honest voter of his vote. I am against it.

Mr. HACKETT: I suppose hon. members opposite are aware of the campaign which has been carried on for some time in the city of Montreal to identify electors. They are aware that a bill was prepared to force every elector to carry a card of identification bearing his photograph. That measure went forward with unanimous approval. This was a matter of some inconvenience, but it was for the purpose of correcting the very ill which is complained of here. If the signature of the document is in itself a great ill, why should we exact that every person who comes into the country must sign? It is impossible to come in on the train from the neighbouring republic without signing a document as to one's origin and so forth, and it is impossible to go into the neighbouring republic without doing the same thing. If these requirements are exacted for a mere transitory visit, it seems to me that perforce like requirements should be exacted of people who are by their vote going to determine what is going to be the policy and even the destiny of the country.

After all I think we can admit that the practical application and use of this document will be restricted to how many constituencies? A few in Montreal. I know nothing of Toronto or the other cities. The very example given by the hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay (Mr. Casgrain) shows that the signature of the document will in no way increase his embarrassment. He said that a deputy returning officer challenged a certain number of people.