

affects every member. Every member should approach such a question with an open mind in order to improve the Act and make it as well adapted as possible to bring about that which we all desire; and I for one approach the consideration of this question with an absolutely free mind and a genuine desire to obtain what assistance I can from any hon. gentleman on either side of the House who has had experience in these matters. It is rather to be regretted that it has been left to this year 1900, to make these changes in the direction of greater severity for offences in elections. It is within the knowledge of all of us that offences in elections are no new affair, but have existed for many years; and this is the first time, within my knowledge, that a serious and honest attempt has been made to provide means to protect the public in such matters. It is a remarkable thing that this attempt should be left till this year 1900 and to this government.

Mr. INGRAM. There have been some new methods since 1896.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. If we examine the comments which have been made on elections held in 1896, we find a remarkable family resemblance to those made upon the elections of that year. If you could apply to the Brockville and West Huron elections all that has been suggested by hon. gentlemen opposite, you would find that they are not isolated cases by any means in this Dominion. Dealing with what my hon. friend from Montmorency (Mr. Casgrain) said, I shall be very glad to consider all his proposals; but I would suggest that the amendments he desires to make be taken up as each section to which they relate comes up for consideration. Some of his amendments may be adopted, but others I consider unworkable. When the hon. gentleman proposed his Bill in the Quebec legislature, he got more sympathy for it from where I sat on the opposite side than he got from those in his own immediate vicinity. I hope that the co-operation which I gave him on that occasion will bear fruit at the present time, and that I shall have the benefit of his wide experience; because he established a reputation in the province of Quebec as one who desired to improve the Franchise Act and who knew how to go about it. He does not forget, I hope, that some of the amendments he suggests were in his mind at the time the Quebec Election Act was under consideration, and that although in his mind they did not get to the House; and perhaps he will explain why his colleagues were not so anxious to adopt those amendments for the purpose of purifying the elections.

Mr. CASGRAIN. I do not know what amendments my hon. friend refers to. The amendments of which I have given notice come from the Bill passed in 1895.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. Not all of them.

Mr. CASGRAIN. There is not one of them that does not come from that Bill.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. I will point out some that come from the Imperial Act, especially that limiting the amount to be expended in an election. That does not come from the Quebec Act.

Mr. CASGRAIN. Yes, it does; it comes from the schedule of the Act.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. I will accept my hon. friend's correction. With regard to the form of the ballot, that is one of the questions which I think ought to be considered. I am not at all wedded to the form which appears in the schedule. My intention is to produce a great number of forms of ballot which have been suggested to us, and have them placed on the Table here, so that we may consider them in committee and determine which form will best meet the object we all have in view. I have in my mind a form of ballot which will prevent the substitution of ballots. I would like to draw the attention of those in favour of the existing form to the results of the last election. I have taken twenty-two electoral districts in the province of Ontario, in probably the most intelligent portion of Ontario, and what is the result?

Mr. BERGERON. Name the counties.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. They begin with Addington and end with Wentworth. As the result, we had in those twenty-five constituencies 3,057 spoiled ballots.

Mr. INGRAM. That is where I find fault with the directions, as given in the old Act, for the guidance of voters in voting. While the mark 'X' is put up in that form 'M.' what I maintain is that the form of the ballot should also be included in the form, so that when the elector came to the poll to vote he would see the proper way to mark the ballot.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. We will have occasion to consider the improvement of the ballots, because I consider it is very essential that we should first improve the ballot so as to make it almost impossible for an elector to destroy his vote by ignorance. The second thing we should have in view is the prevention of any interference with the ballot that may prevent the voter giving expression to his intention with reference to an election. The total rejected ballots in these twenty-five constituencies in 1887 was 586; in 1899, it was 555; and, curious to say, in 1896, it grew to 3,057, or an increase of 500 per cent. Whether that result was due to the form of the ballot or any other cause, I am unable to say.