

case if this Bill passes, because there are a large number of electors, not only in Prince Edward Island, but in British Columbia and the other Provinces, who have voted for and sent men here to represent them in this Parliament, who will be disfranchised by this Bill; and possibly there are some members here from some of those Provinces who will be instrumental in striking off the voters' lists a majority of the voters who sent them here to represent them. Now, I consider this is not very creditable to the members for those Provinces, that they should vote to disfranchise the men who elected and sent them here. Furthermore, with regard to the expense of the new law, if it is put in force: The present system is in many respects an inexpensive system; but if the new system is inaugurated, it will be found to be an extremely expensive one, because we find it will be necessary not only to have revising barristers appointed in the different ridings to superintend the revising of the rolls and make them up in the first place, but they will have clerks and bailiffs, all told, over 600 new officers to be appointed by this Government. No doubt there are a great many people in the Dominion anxiously looking for offices—many people supporting the Government anxiously looking for positions, which it will be necessary to fill if this Bill becomes law. I entirely agree with the remarks made by the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Auger), that it is not the best class of barristers who will be picked up to fill these positions. First-class barristers will not accept such positions, because it will take up so much of their time, and I suppose the salary will not be sufficiently large to recompense them for the time occupied in preparing and revising the lists. I must confess that I have no more confidence in the legal fraternity than the hon. member for Shefford has. I know that many members of this House belong to that profession, but if you take the opinions of the people in the country generally, they are inclined rather to trust men of other professions and businesses than the legal profession. I do not know why this should be so, because I do not know that the legal profession entails upon its members an inclination to be dishonorable in the transaction of public business, any more than other professions. But, at all events, that is the opinion of the public, and I share in that opinion, to some extent. I would just call your attention to some of the provisions of this Bill. Section 17 says:

"On the day and at the time and place appointed, the revising officer shall publicly proceed to the preliminary revision of the list, basing such revision on the evidence and statements before him and of the persons who may then be present to give information in support of or in opposition to the written objections, claims for addition, or other proposed amendments, and he shall then and there correct the list, to the best of his judgment and ability upon the evidence or information before him, attesting with his initials any addition to or erasure or change therein."

Now, let us read that in connection with section 34, which says:

"After the lists for the several polling districts in an electoral district have been so completed, revised and corrected, they shall be certified in the form contained in the schedule to this Act by the revising officer, and kept by him for the purposes of this Act, and a duplicate of each, certified as aforesaid, shall be transmitted forthwith by him to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery at Ottawa, who, on the receipt of all the said lists for any electoral district, shall in the next issue of the *Canada Gazette*, insert a notice in the form contained in the schedule to this Act, on and after the publication of which notice in the *Canada Gazette*, the persons whose names are entered on the said lists as voters shall be held to be duly registered voters in and for such electoral district, subject to correction or amendment by the judgment of a Superior Court on appeal as hereinafter mentioned; Provided, however, that in the event of any such appeal, the said lists, after the publication of the last mentioned notice in the *Canada Gazette*, shall apply to and be final and conclusive as to every election for such electoral district, held before such appeal has been disposed of or the result thereof communicated to the revising officer."

Now, I can see great danger in these two sections. The revising officer completes his list and sends it to the *Canada Gazette*. Appeals which may be pending are to
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have no force or effect in case of an election occurring in the meantime. Now, I remember a case which occurred in the county of Wentworth some years ago, before the system in operation in Ontario was so perfect as it is at present. Just prior to an election in the south riding of that county the county judge, who has since deceased, was appealed to by a lawyer, who, in the interest of the Conservative party, requested that he should put upon the list the names of some seventy electors who had not been put on either by the assessor or the court of revision, or at the final revision made by the judge. That judge did place those seventy names on the list, just prior to the election, and there was no appeal from his decision. Now, I can see danger of the same thing occurring under this Bill. Appeals could be made on questions of law, but not on questions of fact, and while those appeals were pending the incomplete list, which had not been revised or certified, might be made use of to hold an election, and a great injustice would thereby be done to the electors of a riding. Then, section 40 says:

"The revising officer shall have power, at any court or sitting held under this Act by him, to amend or give leave to amend, when he sees fit, any of the proceedings taken in reference to any voters' list, to direct notice to be given to other persons, or to dispense with any notices hereinbefore required to be given, and to adjourn any court or sittings, on the hearing of any claim or objection or proposed amendment, to a future day; and he shall not be bound by strict rules of evidence or forms of procedure, but shall hear and determine all matters coming before him as such revising officer in a summary manner, and so as in his judgment to do justice to all parties."

Now, I think he has unlimited powers to do just as he likes. I think that a remark made by the hon. member for Cumberland (Mr. Townshend) was very appropriate in connection with this section. He said that the chief objection entertained by the Opposition to the Bill was on account of the appointment of revising barristers for fixing up the rolls. Now, that just expresses the view held by myself, and no doubt by other gentlemen on this side of the House, that they were to be appointed for fixing up the rolls. That is to be their chief occupation. They are to fix up the rolls, first, by making them, and afterwards by revising them; and if the revision court is not enough to provide for fixing up the rolls, there is a clause which provides that they can afterwards, at any time, fix them up at their convenience, without giving any notice. Clause 55 says:

"It shall be the duty of a revising officer, on any revision under this Act, of his own motion, where there have been no objections, claims or complaints in reference thereto, to strike out the names on the said lists of voters of any persons who have died or become disqualified, and to change the names of others, where the same are incorrectly entered on any list, and generally to correct such lists, so far as any information in his possession will enable him to do so, in order to carry out the intention of this Act."

I have no doubt the hon. member for Cumberland expressed the true meaning and intent of this, when he said that the revising officers were appointed to fix up the rolls. Now, the hon. Secretary of State, in his speech, said that there was an appeal from the revising barristers. Well, I am not a lawyer, but I think I can interpret a sentence sufficiently well to understand it, and I will just read clause 47, so that it may be clearly understood that there is no appeal, notwithstanding the statement made by the hon. Secretary of State:

"No such appeal shall be allowed or entertained against any decision of the revising officer upon any matter of fact, or the admission or rejection of evidence adduced or offered on any matter of fact, but the appeal shall be allowed only on some point or points of law, as before mentioned. With the consent of the revising officer, any number of persons desiring to appeal on the same point or points of law may be joined in the same statement of case, making it one appeal."

Now, I think the plain English of that is, that no appeal is to be taken from the decision of the revising barrister on matters of fact; and I fancy that the matters to be dealt with in preparing and revising these lists will consist chiefly of matters of fact; there will be questions of law, but they will not occur so often as questions of fact. I was rather