

HOUSE OF COMMONS, ROOM 429,

May 27, 1936.

The special committee appointed to study the Dominion Elections Act, 1934, and the amendments thereto, and the Dominion Franchise Act, 1934, and amendments thereto, met at 11 o'clock, Mr. Bothwell, the chairman, presided.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, we will hear Mr. Butcher on compulsory registration.

Mr. HARRY BUTCHER, recalled.

WITNESS: So far as I can ascertain only two countries have adopted compulsory registration—Australia and New Zealand.

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: Federally.

WITNESS: Federally. Apparently the New Zealand Act is founded upon the Australian Act, so when I speak about the Australian Act I am giving full information in regard to the New Zealand Act also. I wrote to the chief electoral officer of the Commonwealth of Australia, and he very kindly sent me a copy of their Commonwealth Electoral Acts—a copy of the instructions given to divisional returning officers, a copy also of the joint instructions given to Commonwealth and State Assembly electoral registrar appointed to keep subdivision rolls, and a copy of their statutory rules. Perhaps, it would be well to explain that in Australia there are four classes of election officers—or rather three classes in addition to the chief electoral officer. The chief electoral officer has control over the administration of Federal Electoral Acts throughout the whole of the Commonwealth. Beneath him and subject to his instructions there is a Commonwealth electoral officer in each of the six states. Under the direction of this Commonwealth electoral officer there are divisional returning officers, one for each of the 74 divisions. In addition, there is an electoral registrar for each subdivision. I might say that a subdivision corresponds to our polling division. I am informed that, as a general rule, the divisional returning officer in urban divisions is also the electoral registrar for all the subdivisions in his division, and in rural electoral districts the divisional returning officer is also the registrar for all those divisions that are reasonably adjacent to his home office. The particular words of the Commonwealth Act that relate to compulsory registration, perhaps I should quote in full.

Section 41 of the Act reads as follows:—

(1) Any person qualified for enrolment, who lives in a subdivision, and has so lived for a period of one month last past, shall be entitled to have his name placed on the roll for that subdivision.