

Revised Statutes of Canada, entitled: An Act respecting the Electoral Franchise, and all amendments thereto. He said: This is not a Bill to amend the Electoral Franchise Act. That Act cannot be amended. It is vicious in principle, and it is bad in detail, and all the powers of this Parliament cannot amend it. I propose to deal more summarily and effectually with it: I propose to abolish it, lock, stock, and barrel.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the first time.

ELECTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron) moved for leave to introduce Bill (No. 9) to amend the Acts respecting the election of members of the House of Commons. He said: The Bill is not a very long one, and does not contain many clauses; but in my estimation it is an important Bill. The first clause goes back to the old system that we had before the Government, in my judgment with a high hand, assumed the responsibility of appointing returning officers. I go back to the English rule--I believe in English precedents and English rule--and make the sheriffs *ex-officio* returning officers in the various constituencies; and, where there are subdivisions of a county, the sheriff and registrar are returning officers *ex-officio*, and if there are more than two sub-divisions, then I give the Government power to appoint a person to act as returning officer. The second clause of the Bill deals largely with corrupt practices. Acts which do not now come under the law, I make corrupt practices by this Bill, and I punish every corrupt act by imprisonment or fine, or both, imprisonment to the extent of two years and a fine of \$500. Then I endeavour to surround with every possible safeguard the ballot boxes while in the hands of deputy returning officers and returning officers; and I deal with a species of bribery largely prevalent during elections--that is betting as to how a man shall vote or that he shall not vote, or as to the majority in a parish or community, or the aggregate majority all over the Dominion--more effectually than it is now dealt with. I also deal not only with members of the Government, although they are the principal sinners, but with any private individual, who shall hold out, as an inducement for its support, to a constituency indebted or under obligations to the Government, that if it will support any particular candidate or party such indebtedness or obligation shall be discharged. I also make provision that no person, be he member of the Government or not, be he high functionary of the Government or other employee or other individual, shall use any influence with any public body or corporation in order to coerce that corporation into forcing their employees to vote for or against any candidate. I also make the bribe as well as the briber punishable by fine or imprisonment. I also make every violation of the election law by Government officials a misdemeanour punishable by fine of \$1,000 or imprisonment for two years, at the discretion of the judge, and in the case of those who are not officials, by six months in jail or a fine of \$500. I also endeavour to prevent a practice, which I am sorry to see prevails to some extent, namely, the swopping of election petitions. If a man files an election petition, he ought to be compelled to go on

Mr. CAMERON (Huron).

with it, as a good many petitions now filed are no doubt purely speculative; and I propose that no swopping of petitions be allowed except under the sanction of the court, which sanction must be based on the affidavit of every party to the petition, both solicitors and agents. And then, Sir, I hold out a little bit of comfort, a little balm of Gilead to the First Minister, the Finance Minister, the Minister of Public Works, and the Minister of the Interior, and, I believe, another Minister who had the misfortune to have a petition against him for misconduct in the last election. Under the law, as it now stands, a man may be unseated for an isolated act of corruption. A candidate may endeavour to conduct his political campaign with clean hands. He may instruct his agents to conduct it with clean hands. He may do his level best to have a pure election; and yet some over-zealous friend may spend a dollar bill in corrupt practices, and the candidate will be unseated, and saddled with all the costs; or perhaps some secret enemy may do something that will constitute him an agent of the member elect, and commit an act of corruption which may cause the sitting member to be unseated. I adopt the English law, and, to some extent, the law of Ontario, by providing that, in the case of trifling and unimportant acts, although proved before the courts, unless the acts were of an extensive character affecting to some extent the whole constituency, the member shall not be unseated.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) Is the Bill retroactive?

Mr. CAMERON (Huron). No; but if the Minister of Finance desires it I am prepared to make it so. The next question I deal with is the question of the time for presenting petitions against sitting members. As the law now stands, a petition has to be presented within thirty days after the member is gazetted. Sometimes the gazetting is irregular. I do not blame the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, for I think he has done his duty in that respect; but I do blame the returning officers, wherever they, within thirty days, get their instructions, for the irregular manner in which the returns are made. I provide that every petition shall be presented within thirty days after the polling day. That will put members on both sides upon a footing of perfect equality, and surely the Government cannot want more than that. I also provide that any counter petition shall be presented within fifteen days after the presenting of the petition. These are the main features of my Bill, and I hope they will commend themselves to the approval of the House.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the first time.

FISHING VESSELS OF THE UNITED STATES.

Mr. TUPPER moved for leave to introduce Bill (No. 10) respecting fishing vessels of the United States of America. He said: It will be recollected that, in pursuance of the protocol annexed to the draft of the Treaty of Washington of 1888, legislation was enacted in this Parliament, under which American fishing vessels were permitted, during two years, the time proposed to be required for the consideration of that treaty, to obtain certain privileges in Canadian ports, granted them under the provisions of the Treaty of 1818. That Act