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## The Journal of Commerce

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## Election Law

In the trial of a controverted election petition in Ontario a few days ago, the respondent was called on to answer charges of every kind of offence known to the political calendar. These charges were set forth at great length in a petition duly filed under the law respecting the trial of such cases. The charges were published in the newspapers and thus the respondent stood before the public as one solemnly accused of high political crimes and misdemeanors. Many days passed between the filing of the accusations and the trial of the case, the respondent meanwhile resting under the grave charges so set forth. Then the day of trial came, and after a little flurry in general support of the petition, the counsel for the petitioner admitted in the court that as respects the greater part of the charges, he had no evidence to sustain them. Forty-five charges of wrong-doing were publicly abandoned. Yet these accusations, now admitted to have been groundless, were published to the wide world and probably read by many people who will never hear of the later confession of their unfounded character.

Such proceedings do a great injustice to the person who is accused. If a newspaper, in the ordinary course of journalism, published an article accusing a citizen of wrong-doing, the publisher would be liable to prosecution, criminal or civil, by the person unjustly accused. But because the charges were made in the form of an election petition, and published as a part of the record of a court, it seems to be held that they are not libellous, and consequently the person who is falsely accused has no remedy.

The Ontario case is not an exceptional one. It is one of many of the same character that have occurred in connection with elections. The making of charges with no foundation is a too common practice in election cases. Surely such proceedings call for reform. The purity of election is necessary to the success of our democratic institutions. Where there is evidence that bribery and corruption have been practiced in an election contest, the offenders should be called to a strict account. But nobody should be permitted to make with impunity

reckless and slanderous charges against a member or candidate. The law should require that charges of wrong-doing should be made only where the petitioner has knowledge of the facts and is ready to support his charges before the courts. Those who make such charges and cause them to be published where there is no ground for them should not escape responsibility for their conduct. There is need of some reform in our election law to prevent the injustice that so often occurs under the present system.

## The Question of Holidays

The demand voiced last week by large commercial and industrial interests for the stabilization, so to speak, of the Easter holiday is one which raises the whole question of holiday dates, a question which has long needed reconsideration in the light of modern conditions. A scientific programme of holidays, adapted to the climatic characteristics of the various seasons and admitting of no changes except in the way of carefully considered and deliberately enacted alterations for permanent betterment, would undoubtedly be protective of much saving to employers and of greater comfort and enjoyment to the holiday-makers themselves.

Probably the most difficult of all holidays to bring into line with a rational design for the year would be this Easter holiday which the Chambers of Commerce have been discussing. It is a purely religious observance in its origin, though its practice has had but little religious coloring, at all events in Protestant communities, in recent years. The religious tradition governing its annual occurrence is very ancient, and could hardly be altered without the unanimous consent of all the religious bodies of foremost importance in the country or countries which might set about the establishment of the improved industrial calendar; and that unanimity is probably too much to hope for, even in these days of Lambeth Conferences and other evidences of brotherliness.

Even allowing Easter to retain its quaint peculiarities of date, it would still be possible to reform the rest of the holiday calendar with excellent results—though in