

ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO HIS EXCELLENCY'S SPEECH.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) moved :

That the Order for the consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, have precedence over all other business except the introduction of Bills, until this motion is disposed of.

Motion agreed to.

SOUTH AFRICAN WAR—CANADIAN CONTINGENTS.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). By command of His Excellency, I beg to lay on the Table certain papers in connection with the sending of the contingents. These are the papers which were mentioned the other day on the opening of the session. I had the honour on Saturday last of sending my hon. friend the leader of the opposition all the papers I had at the time. I have given orders to have them printed and expected to have the printed copies distributed to-day to the members of the House. The papers I lay on the Table of the House are only part of the papers. I did not take the precaution of having them completed, because I expected to be able to lay on the Table the printed copies, which I expect to be distributed in a few minutes. Apart from that I have other correspondence on the same subject which I shall lay on the Table later in the day.

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION.

Mr. SPEAKER. I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery the certificate of the election and return of Edmond Fortier, Esquire, for the electoral district of Lotbinière.

FIRST READING.

Bill (No. 2) to further amend the Fertilizers Act (Mr. Domville).

THE DOMINION ELECTION ACT.

Mr. INGRAM moved for leave to introduce Bill (No. 3) to further amend the Dominion Election Act.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). Explain.

Mr. INGRAM. I explained very fully a similar Bill which I introduced last session, amending, as I thought, several of the grievances that honest electors have to complain of. I may say that in this present Bill

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

there are something over thirty sections or subsections dealing with the election law, and in it I am trying to do away with some of the imperfections that have been developed in the operation of this law, with the view of conducting honestly elections in this country. I presume that we are all anxious to amend the present Dominion election law. Hon. gentlemen on the government side are, of course, aware that whatever tactics their friends may resort to in their favour, can also be adopted by friends of the hon. gentlemen on this side of the House; but I assume that we are all anxious to perfect the Dominion Election Act, so as to secure honest elections.

Now, in this Bill I provide, in the first place, that only resident returning officers and poll clerks shall be employed in each locality, and no others. Instead of allowing the returning officer to say to any candidate or his agent that he declines to furnish them with the names of the deputy returning officers or their poll clerks, I propose to make a provision by which the returning officer shall, within a certain time previous to the election, expose in his office for public inspection the names of all the returning officers with the poll clerks, and the polling booths at which they are to act, so that the public may have an opportunity of knowing those things if they see fit. Instead of leaving it discretionary with the deputy returning officers to furnish a statement of the state of the polls in which they act, I propose an amendment to make it compulsory on their part to furnish that statement to the candidates or their agents at that poll.

Now, with respect to the \$200 deposit, I may remark that it is a liberal principle which was advocated in this House by the Hon. Edward Blake when in opposition, that a \$200 deposit ought not to be required. In the Provincial Act of Ontario no such deposit is required, and I cannot see any reason why it should be required in the case of Dominion elections. I also find from the manner in which elections have been conducted in Ontario—I will not here speak of the other provinces, because I am not so well acquainted with their mode of conducting elections—that under the new system of conducting elections in our province, something more stringent is required to prevent the crookedness that has been practised. So I propose in one or two sections, which are explanatory or directory to the deputy returning officer, to adopt a new method of opening the polls, by which the candidates or their agents are entitled to inspect the ballot papers, the ballot boxes, and all documents that are to be used at the election. I will tell you one of the reasons why I propose that amendment. In the election in East Middlesex the other day, they ran short of ballot papers at one of the polling booths, and I propose to prevent the possibility of that thing occurring