

therefore affect only city constituencies like that of my hon. friend from Quebec East or mine. I do not see anything at all in the objections of my hon. friend from Quebec East and my hon. friend from Hochelaga. I do not agree with that hon. gentleman that the vote is polled to the greatest extent between four and seven o'clock. It is also polled early in the morning and, for the working man especially, between noon and two o'clock in the afternoon. As regards the argument about crowding the polls, our opponents seem to forget that under the old law the same thing could be done. Any elector could be asked to give an affidavit—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh no.

Mr. DUPRE:—a sworn statement, which was much longer than the one now being proposed and which consists of only two paragraphs. I do not see any objection, therefore. On the contrary, I think it will be welcomed in my constituency at any rate. The honest voter will never object to such a procedure.

Mr. RINFRET: We are just as anxious as the Solicitor General to prevent impersonation, but every time we discuss an electoral law or an amendment thereto we are confronted with two conflicting principles; one is to adopt complicated devices to prevent impersonation and the other is to make it as easy as possible for the honest elector to vote. I have always stood for the latter. In my opinion the electoral legislation adopted last year and the amendments before the house this year tend to make it harder and harder for the average honest citizen to register his vote. What is written on the document is rather complicated and in addition he may have to fight for his own right during the revision. And now he is confronted with the possibility of having to read and sign a document at the poll. It is well known that the average person objects to taking an oath; rightly or wrongly he considers it an insult. If people have to read a long document and sign it a number of them will object. I am very much of the opinion of the former Minister of Justice that while an impersonator may be stopped by having to sign a document, if anyone wishes to send impersonators to a poll such impersonators will be schooled in what they have to do in order to attain their purpose. For one impersonator who will be stopped by this amendment, from ten to twenty or more honest voters will be prevented from voting. The honest voter expects the ordinary procedure and if he is confronted with a docu-

ment of this kind he may refuse to sign it. If a candidate or his agents conspired to put through a number of illicit votes, we may be sure that such impersonators would be properly schooled, and I cannot see that the fact that a record remains after the vote is cast is any advantage over the old system. After all, if a man comes to vote for someone else and signs that other person's name, when he has left the poll there is nothing more against him than the fact that he has left a document behind him. There is nothing more by which to trace him than if he had merely taken an oath under the old system.

Mr. MANION: There is forgery against him as well as perjury if he signs another man's name.

Mr. RINFRET: Yes, but when he has disappeared it will be hard to prove either against him. Speaking from my experience in Montreal, I must say that the important thing seems to me to be to make it as easy as possible for the honest man to vote. I am afraid that all these proposals and particularly this one requiring a man to sign his name will keep more people from voting than it will prevent impersonators from registering votes.

Mr. TUMMON: If his vote is challenged now has he not got to take an oath? If he is an honest man will he hesitate to sign a document?

Mr. DONNELLY: As I understand it, this amendment is introduced to prevent people from impersonating voters. I notice that the Solicitor General said that impersonation was almost unknown in the country. The Prime Minister interjected that it was absolutely unknown in the country districts. May I suggest therefore to the Minister of Justice that this section be applied only to the urban centres and not to the rural districts. It can be used in rural districts only to annoy voters where, as the Prime Minister has said, impersonation is unknown. It can be and is used in this way because I have had experience with it being used to annoy voters at the time of an election, and I would suggest that it be eliminated entirely so far as rural districts are concerned.

Mr. CASGRAIN: Like the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Lapointe) and the hon. member for St. James (Mr. Rinfret), I am opposed to this amendment in the form in which it is. I think we are all agreed that impersonation should be stopped, but this is a very unpopular way to go about stopping it. While we may stop a few of the impersonators