

## SHOULD ALIENS VOTE?

Should aliens vote at the civic elections?

It is estimated that on the civic voters' lists there are the names of from four to five thousand aliens.

In the use of the word "aliens" let it not be understood that there is any desire to cast the slightest reflection upon the citizens who have not taken out their papers. They may be as deeply interested in the property and financial welfare of Winnipeg as British subjects.

In all other countries, however, the right to vote is emblematic of full citizenship. It is intended in our country that only full-fledged British subjects should exercise the franchise. Laws there are to prevent aliens from voting, but under our civic charter such happy-go-lucky conditions exist that only by guess work are aliens excluded from the voters' list.

An Austrian or a Turk, for instance, might have come to Winnipeg a year ago, purchased a piece of property, registered the same, and, under our law, his name would in all probability, duly appear on the voters' lists for the civic election of 1914.

Doubtless all British subjects would prefer that British voters alone should have a voice in the election of controllers, aldermen and trustees next week.

The question then arises as to what steps should be taken to confine the franchise to those legally and rightfully entitled to vote.

The law provides that any person entering a polling booth to vote may be sworn as to whether he or she is a British subject.

Discrimination among British subjects in a polling-booth would not be tolerated in a Canadian city, therefore the only course open to the civic rulers desirous of confining the elections to British subjects, is to devise some means of thorough scrutineering; in other words, swearing all voters on the qualification of British citizenship.

We are living in war times, and the probability is that the citizens would not murmur if put to a slight inconvenience for the sake of confining the election to British voters, and excluding aliens from a voice through a British ballot-box.

We are informed that the law may be invoked if only the civic authorities dare to put it into effect.

If the authorities shrink from what seems their plain duty in the matter it is within the power of any body of citizens to appoint scrutineers at every poll, with instructions to swear every voter.

For years The Tribune has called attention to the state of the civic voters' lists, and appealed to the authorities to amend the law. We have pointed out how aliens might be kept off the lists, and also how to guard against repeaters in the case where a rate-payer's name is registered, say in two, four or half a dozen wards.

If citizens feel that four or five thousand aliens should have the privileges of British citizens at the ballot box next week, then the course is to do nothing. If, however, it is felt that the franchise is a privilege for British citizens, then it is up to the mayor and council, or the citizens, on their own initiative, to make a move.