

Canada Elections Act

printed ballots from a number of constituencies carried around. There are travellers in Canada who unfortunately might suffer an automobile accident and be taken to a hospital and deprived of their vote. Why should they not be able to vote?

For these reasons alone, Mr. Speaker, I urge that this particular Bill be given full consideration and, if possible, referred to committee and that the committee have hearings on it. We have all heard of Bills that get lost when they go to committee. I would like to think that perhaps if we set a six-week or two-month limit, some defineable limit within which this particular subject matter would be heard and a resolution arrived at that would satisfy that problem.

Mr. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton-Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I will only take a moment of the time of the House on this Bill, the intent of which is certainly correct and proper. I certainly agree with the Hon. Member who moved the Bill that this provision is required in a riding such as my own consisting of 6,500 square miles and we have several hospitals. The only problem I have with it, though, is that to establish one mobile polling station would mean they would never make the rounds in one day within my constituency. So that the Bill could be construed to mean that we have only one mobile polling station in each electoral district.

For this reason, I think that a suggestion to refer this Bill to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections is quite proper. It is the Hon. Member's second attempt to have this particular convenience to the voters introduced into the Canada Elections Act, with his first attempt made in 1976 when he introduced a Private Member's Bill in the same fashion. That Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections after second reading. It was never reported back to the House.

● (1250)

Therefore, I would move at this point:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-518, an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, be not now read a second time, but that the order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn, and the subject matter therein referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections".

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that Your Honour called me to second the motion. It is the second time I have had occasion to offer to second a motion presented by the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex (Mr. Ferguson). Now it has actually happened that I have done it. I will not occupy the time of the House for very long because I understand that the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) would like to speak for a few moments. He has always had an interest in the Bill.

When the Bill does go to Committee, I hope no one will be concerned about the fact that it appears to speak about a mobile voting station, as if it were singular, per riding. I think that the Interpretations Act would allow the singular to

include the plupart and that the regulatory power of the Chief Electoral Officer could be used to deal with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. The Chair has made an error. I saw the sense of agreement of the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and, of course, then proposed his name as the seconder. However, that was an error because the Hon. Member is in fact rising to speak on the subject, and perhaps, with agreement, someone else will second the motion. We will consider the amendment seconded by Mr. Maltais.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, it ought not to come as a surprise to any Hon. Member of the House, but your ruling is quite correct. I think that the rule concerning the seconder is something forgotten. I had hoped it would be forgotten today, but it was not.

At any rate, concerning problems, I think that the Chief Electoral Officer tries to meet the problems concerning apartment buildings, extended care and nursing homes. There is a singular problem with respect to hospitals. I must say, representing a constituency with both a rural and suburban make-up, that it would be particularly useful in rural areas. I must say that I can envisage it would be extremely useful in rural areas, where, for instance, extended care facilities are not large enough to warrant a polling station for itself. The people there have as much right to vote as people who live in larger areas.

All in all, I am delighted that my friend, the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro), has once again demonstrated his concern and brought the Bill forward and, as indicated by the Parliamentary Secretary, that it has been accepted by the Government side for consideration, as evident in the motion to withdraw the Bill and send the subject matter to the committee. I support it and look forward to hearing the words of the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) for his Bill. I join with other Hon. Members in congratulating him on his success in having his Bill withdrawn, and having the subject matter referred to committee for study and consideration. I say this with tongue in cheek because I tried the same thing not less than a month ago concerning a matter similar to this one, and I was not as successful as the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich in convincing the Government.

The Bill I presented dealt with the right of Canadians to vote wherever they are at a time of general election, be they travelling abroad, in an embassy, on business, or working for the Canadian Forces overseas, but not as a teacher or as a member of the Forces. I thought the Bill made sense. However, I was not as lucky as the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich and I will have to go to him to learn a few tricks as to how one gets his Bill through and convinces the Government to act positively in such matters.

I just want to put a couple of comments on the record. I was told at the time that the Chief Electoral Officer, by statute,