

take an interest in the election it tends to lower our whole system of government, so that compulsory enrolment is a step in the right direction in my humble opinion. Now, as to whether the system in Australia is better than ours, I am not prepared to say. For instance, in our last two elections we have had what you might call more or less compulsory registration, to the extent that government representatives, two per poll, looked after registration. I know that was the situation in the cities particularly, but I am not familiar with it outside.

In Australia, of course, compulsory enrolment is under the government, and all the officials—the police, clerks of the courts and other public officials—are part of the staff that do the enrolling. They enrol yearly, and then they enrol every three months, so that at the end of the year they really have their lists covered four times—December 31st, April 1st, July 1st, and I think, October 1st.

The CHAIRMAN: Every three months.

Mr. MACNICOL: Yes. Every three months. And they keep the lists up to date. Mr. Butcher said something about the lists being in shape. They are kept in shape fairly accurately, because if a man or a woman dies the registrar of vital statistics has to report to the chief returning officer that Mr. or Mrs. so and so, over 21 years of age, has passed away. If a man moves from one sub-division or another he is compelled by law, after he is there for one month, to proceed to the registrar and re-register in that new division. The registrars of all vital statistics including marriages must at once notify the returning officer.

The CHAIRMAN: You have made no comparison as Mr. Butcher did of figures as far as cost is concerned?

Mr. MACNICOL: No. I am convinced that compulsory voting reduces the cost. I am very much afraid that in Canada an election to the House of Commons might develop into a matter of rich, richer and richest. I am now speaking of compulsory voting. If some method were not taken to induce the voters to vote, the elections might develop into a matter of rich, richer and richest.

Mr. HEAPS: Are you also in favour of compulsory registration?

Mr. MACNICOL: My mind is still open, Mr. Chairman. I believe that compulsory enrolment would be a step in the right direction, but I would not want to say to the committee at the moment that I endorse it 100 per cent, although I believe I am leaning in that direction.

As to compulsory voting, I believe that it will reduce the cost of elections. If a voter is compelled to go out to vote, then a larger number vote than otherwise would, unless the candidates urge them out as we have to do now in this country. It will be noted in the figures I gave that in Australia, even under compulsory voting, in some ridings the vote is less than 90 per cent, but in a general way their voting is very high, averaging as I pointed out a moment ago in places around 94 to 95 per cent.

Mr. HEAPS: Have you found in your research work that our voting has always been much higher in the summer months than in the winter months?

Mr. MACNICOL: Yes.

Mr. HEAPS: Don't you think we ought to have some recommendation in our report that our elections should be held at certain times in the year?

Mr. MACNICOL: I hesitate, Mr. Chairman, to go that far because I believe that the practice in the last several general elections has resulted in the government of the day taking steps to make sure that elections are held at a time when people could go to vote. To go to the extent of stating that elections shall not be held in the months of December, January, February or March would get us more in line with the United States system where they hold their elections