

The WITNESS: No, there has never been such comparable parallel. However there used to be deferred elections.

Mr. DEWAR: But this particular thing would only apply to disasters.

The WITNESS: Yes.

Mr. DEWAR: Well, in view of that, I do not see why we should labour this point to that extent. Now, let us say a disaster occurs in Qu'Appelle of the type suggested by this new subsection, who is the one to determine just what constitutes a disaster? I think that is a matter which might well be left to the electoral officer in the district to report to the chief electoral officer. Let's proceed with it.

Mr. MURPHY: Then, Mr. Chairman, there is a proposal in the fourth last line that a new writ ordering an election shall be issued within blank months, that might mean twelve months or it might mean most anything. What did you have in mind there?

The WITNESS: We wanted to leave that for the decision of the committee.

Mr. ARGUE: How can the committee pass that when they have not made a decision on that important part of it. They might postpone it forty-eight months until the next general election. I suppose there was a purpose in leaving it blank?

The WITNESS: Yes, it was left blank purposely so the committee could decide what period of time should be provided.

Mr. WARD: I would like to ask Mr. Castonguay what are the objections to deferred elections. You spoke of the Red River Valley being flooded last year. Would you have any objection to transferring it to another constituency which was not affected by the general flood conditions for the purposes of a general election?

The WITNESS: Generally speaking I do not think any political party that I know of thinks very much of deferred elections at a general election.

Mr. APPLEWHAITE: This would only apply after the writ issued?

The WITNESS: Yes, after the writ issued.

Mr. APPLEWHAITE: And once the writ has been issued I suppose there is no way of withdrawing it.

The WITNESS: Before a writ issues it is a matter for the Governor in Council to decide the date on which it will be issued, but after the writ has issued there is no machinery for withdrawing the writ in the event of disaster.

Mr. PEARKES: Can we get any suggestions as to the period of time?

Mr. CANNON: I would move, Mr. Chairman, that it be six months. I think that is a reasonable time.

The WITNESS: There is this consideration, that the Governor in Council can issue today a writ ordering a general election, say for next October. There is no time limit in so far as the date when polling day at a general election must be set, it is generally set for a period of 60 days between the date of the writ and polling day. In the case of a by-election for instance, the Governor-in-Council can also issue a writ today ordering a by-election next October. It has never been done. That length of time has never been extended more than a period of sixty between the day of the issue of the writ and polling day. I do not think the period should be too long here because should the Governor in Council find it impossible because of the disaster to order an election say within a required period of two months, the Governor in Council could then issue a writ at the end of the period and set polling day for the election at a date three months after the prescribed period of two months when it could be practicable to hold an election. It might be made three months, or six months.

The CHAIRMAN: We have a motion from Mr. Cannon that the period be six months.