

Harbour and Cartwright—communities in which several hundred people live. They are not asking for anything fancy; they are asking only that the Department of Transport continue to provide its service until the independent organization, Bell Canada, gets around to providing a decent service.

I earnestly hope, Mr. Speaker, that the answer from the minister's representative will not be, "We are looking into it." There has been ample time to look into it. I have given these communications to the minister; he expressed his concern to me and said he would see that a reasonable standard of service was maintained. I hope that will be the case.

Mr. Gérard Loiselle (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that not only is the minister looking into it but that he can give a very encouraging answer to the hon. member. I suppose the hon. member's question is directed to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) because the Minister of Transport is from his province, but I should point out that responsibility for the maintenance of the Labrador service now rests with the Department of Telecommunications.

The difficulties referred to are the unfortunate result of unavoidable delays in the delivery of equipment to Bell Canada, which holds the franchise for the area and which is to take over the service previously provided by the Department of Transport. Changes were made in anticipation of the transfer to Bell Canada, but because of the timing problem certain inconveniences have resulted, and as the hon. member has mentioned, his people have been suffering since.

Steps have been taken to correct these inconveniences. The Minister of Transport has indicated a willingness to reactivate the original equipment at those locations where this appears necessary, as an interim measure until the Bell service is in full operation. In this regard, stations that were serviced by Department of Transport radio-telephones up to August 1 are now being reactivated. Both the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) will do everything possible to ensure that service to people of the Labrador coast is maintained at least at the level that prevailed before the Bell transfer was undertaken. As the hon. member can see, the Minister of Transport, who is from the same province, is looking after the interests of the people of Newfoundland.

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT—SUGGESTED VOTE BY MAIL FOR DISABLED PERSONS

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be raising a question during the late show on a night when it seems that we are getting favourable replies. My question is based on a point which I raised on Monday, November 3, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 405, when I asked this question:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Secretary of State. In view of the fact that when the Manitoba legislature amended the provincial Elections Act to provide for voting at age 18 it also included a provision to make it possible for persons who are so disabled they cannot get to the polls to vote by mail, I wonder whether the federal government would consider making a similar recommendation so far as the federal Elections Act is concerned?

The Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) replied that he was not responsible for amendments to the Elections Act and that I should put my question to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald). I was a little puzzled by his advice because I had looked at the book that morning and found that it confirmed that the Secretary of State is responsible for the supervision of the Chief Electoral Officer. However, that is a minor point and I am delighted to see the President of the Privy Council here tonight to respond to my question.

Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that the Manitoba legislature at a recent special session did pass Bill 38, entitled an act to amend the Elections Act. This bill makes two changes. On the one hand it lowers the voting age for provincial elections in Manitoba to 18 and, in addition, it includes a provision under which persons who are physically incapacitated may cast their vote by mail. The arrangements, of course, are spelled out in Manitoba's Bill 38 and are similar to arrangements made for members of the armed forces to vote in the federal election and the arrangements made in some other provinces for absentee voting.

However, the details are not important; what is important is that something has been done. In Manitoba persons who are physically incapacitated and therefore through no fault of their own are unable to go to the polls will be able to exercise their franchise in provincial elections in my province. It is my earnest hope that a similar provision will be included in the Canada Elections Act, and that this will be one of the results of the study to that legislation now being given by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.