

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

with normal civilian procedure if he does not vote by mail and if he resides in an electoral district (constituency) in Ontario in which is located the address declared by him as his place of ordinary residence for purpose of the C.F.V.R. It is emphasized that unless a member has declared a place in Ontario as his place of ordinary residence for the purpose of the C.F.V.R. and resides in that Ontario electoral district (constituency) in which is located the address as declared he is not repeat not entitled to be enumerated or vote in accordance with the civilian procedure.

That is quite clear and precise. This makes the picture very clear so far as D.N.D. routine orders are concerned. But one big argument arose when it was learned from the Ontario election act that one could vote if he or she had resided in Ontario for 12 months. If the Ontario regulations do not clarify this point in so far as military personnel are concerned, I would like to ask the minister to discuss the matter with the chief electoral officer in Ontario on behalf of our armed forces. I have been informed that the returning officer in Renfrew North instructed the enumerators not to enumerate military personnel, and that he in turn, of course, had been given these instructions by the chief electoral officer of Ontario. On the other hand the routine order which was sent out from D.N.D. headquarters is quite precise and to the point. Yet I have received a large number of complaints from personnel who did not have a vote. Naturally a man considers a vote a very valuable asset and is justly annoyed if he ends up without a vote in cases where he actually qualifies. Would the minister check into the validity of these complaints and clarify the situation? Would he also discuss with the chief electoral officer in Ontario—

• (10:10 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted for his speech has expired.

Hon. Léo Cadieux (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Renfrew North (Mr. Hopkins) has raised here tonight a very interesting problem. Unfortunately, however, this is not a matter which is the direct responsibility of the Department of National Defence or indeed the federal government. It is entirely within the responsibility of the chief electoral officer of Ontario to decide how the elections act shall be implemented. Unfortunately there has been some confusion in a number of constituencies where it is assumed that because a serviceman lives in a particular constituency for a

[Mr. Hopkins.]

period exceeding 12 months he automatically qualifies to vote under the Ontario elections act.

Ontario is one of the few provinces which makes provision for absentee votes based on the serviceman's statement of ordinary residence, no matter where he may be in Canada or abroad. If he shows an Ontario residence, he can vote in an Ontario election. If, however, his statement shows that his ordinary place of residence is outside Ontario, then he is advised through service channels that he should not vote in Ontario, even if he is enumerated.

I believe that part of the confusion lies in the fact that the Ontario elections act provides that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may take a special procedure under this act, and one of the special procedures has been the taking of votes by mail of the members of the Canadian forces in Canada and abroad. To alleviate the problem of a heavy mail ballot, the chief electoral officer requested that a member of the Canadian armed forces residing in an electoral constituency that is the same as his ordinary place of residence should be encouraged to be enumerated at his civilian poll.

In conclusion I should like once again to congratulate the hon. member for pursuing this matter, since it demonstrates to me his initiative as a member of this house. However I will direct his comments to the chief electoral officer of Ontario, since unfortunately the Department of National Defence is only an agent in respect of this election procedure.

Mr. Webb: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. minister—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): Order. I regret to interrupt, but I must point out that the hon. member cannot intervene in the debate because the procedure is that the question shall be put by the hon. member and replied to either by the minister himself or his representative.

Mr. Webb: With all respect, Mr. Speaker, the time allotted to the minister has not yet expired—three minutes. I have kept track of the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): I should like to remind the hon. member that we have all the assistance needed for the timing of speeches in the house by an hon. member or by a minister. We know perfectly well that seven minutes are allotted to a member and