

Canada Elections Act

measure which might disfranchise students at the next election, when they have a vote under the existing arrangements.

Mr. D. W. Groos (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I find this is not the first time I am in complete agreement with the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) and the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman). I think this is a good bill and I am going to vote for it. However, before I resume my seat—and I shall take only a few minutes, so that the bill may come to a vote—I would like to point out that there are a number of other amendments in the Canada Elections Act which also bear consideration and should be revised in the very near future. Some of these have been mentioned in passing by other speakers, but I believe they bear repetition.

With regard to people who happen to be in hospital, surely in this day and age we should be able to find some means of allowing them to vote in their home riding and not in the riding in which they happen to be in bed. I believe a study of this situation could resolve the matter and an amendment could be incorporated in a revision of the Canada Elections Act.

Then there is the matter of absentee voters, people who will be out of the country and know ahead of time that they will be out of the country at the time of the election. It should be a fairly simple matter today, particularly when we have the advantage of computers and every other known mechanical device, to register these people to enable them to cast their vote before they go away.

I come now to persons—and I am not exactly sure of my ground in this case—on embassy staffs abroad. I know that servicemen abroad are permitted to vote, and so are their wives, but I am not absolutely sure of the status of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. I must tell the hon. member that the bill under study deals with the franchise of students. The hon. member must restrict his remarks to this point.

Mr. Groos: Thank you for bringing my attention to that, Mr. Speaker. I am speaking, of course, of students at embassies.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Groos: I would also like to mention the question of servicemen, many of whom are also students, I might say, and their wives.

When they return from abroad, the husbands having carried out the duty required of them by their country, they find they are not permitted to vote unless they have been back from abroad for the minimum period of six months. I believe this matter bears looking into. I agree once again with the hon. member for Hillsborough, and I shall not oppose the passage of this bill. I shall vote for it. However, I believe the complete Canada Elections Act is in need of something more than the bandaid repairs to which the hon. member referred, of which this bill is but one example.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan).

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, could I offer the floor to my colleague, who was on his feet before me?

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon because it is not very often that I can support a Liberal bill. I want to congratulate the hon. member who introduced it, and it will certainly receive my support, because I believe it is very important. In what I shall have to say I shall require only a few minutes.

As has been said, this bill is very important not only to the student population but to many other people in this country. We often speak about young people and we want to get them interested in Canadian affairs. We want them to play a more active part in Canadian politics, and yet we prevent them from voting. This is not justice. Students would be a lot more responsible if they were allowed to vote. It is perhaps through lack of interest in Canadian politics, or because they are not allowed to vote in some instances, or maybe because of a lack of understanding that students have turned to other ways of participating, such as demonstrations. It is through voting and through exercising their franchise that students can become more responsible and more interested in Canadian affairs and politics. This is great, so let us allow students to exercise their franchise.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Mr. Murray McBride (Lanark and Renfrew): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make but a couple of points. I do not think what I shall say has been underscored by anyone who has taken part in the debate thus far. I shall get