

Dominion Elections Act

Who is your moderator?" He replied, "By dads, I don't know. I knew the one ten years ago, but I have not known one since then." So I think we must not ask too much of the public; they are only human; but I do believe they should be encouraged and assisted to reach the polls on election day. A great many people never bother much about an election until it is almost upon them. Great numbers do not make any plans for going to the polling booths; many do not even bother to find out where they are until they go to vote. One thing that might be suggested by way of reform would be to show people where and when they vote. This perhaps would not be so essential in a rural constituency, but it is particularly important where the population is more heavily concentrated.

So I believe we might consider going back to the practice which once was followed, in my opinion with very good results; that is, the practice of sending postcards to the voters a week or less before the election, showing the place, date and hours of voting. Many candidates do this themselves in order to get the vote out. I have not done it, but I know of others who have gone to great expense in sending out postcards a few days before the election showing where the voters should go to cast their ballots; and I believe that is an outlay the government itself might well assume. Hon. members will recall that under the present legislation a copy of the voters' list for the particular subdivision must be sent to each qualified voter; and on that list the voter will see the place of polling, the date, and the hours. However, I am afraid we are all the same, and it is easy to lose a piece of paper even as large as that. Most people do not have a filing system or a filing clerk, and these things get mislaid. Another point is that these lists are sent out some two or three weeks before the election, though at the moment I have forgotten the exact time, since the revision has not taken place up to that time; and in the interval the whole business is often forgotten.

I am going to suggest to the committee that when they sit they might profitably consider leaving that voters' list provision as it is. I think that is a good idea, because people can see whether someone else is on or off the list and the revision becomes that much simpler. I would not touch that provision, but I would add to what is already in the regulations the sending out of a card approximately a week before election day, notifying every qualified voter on the list where he or she should vote, the date of the polling, and the hours of polling. My judgment in this connection would perhaps be tempered by one consideration. If it were a tremendous

expense to do this, then perhaps it would have to be considered in the light of the expenditure that would be incurred. Having regard to the importance that I attach, and which I fancy many members attach, to the desirability of getting as many people to the polls as possible on a voluntary basis, I suggest that this practice would be of inestimable value in seeing to it that the maximum number of qualified voters were at least shown the way to the polls.

I should like to make this suggestion in all good faith to the committee, in the hope that it will be considered. I am not a member of the committee, so for that reason I thought it wise to put the suggestion on the record. I should like to see this, and the numerous other matters which will come before that committee, thoroughly aired. In Canada we should try, as far as possible to have eventually the best machinery, and the cleanest, most decent system of electing members of parliament that is to be found in any democratic country in the world. It is a challenge which I think the people of Canada ought to accept.

Hon. Brooke Claxton (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, with the concluding remarks of the member for Peel (Mr. Graydon) I am sure the whole house will be in full agreement. Several members have referred to the service vote, having particular reference to what took place at Greenwood. I feel it is desirable, and I think it is only fair to the services, that I should say a word of explanation.

At the outset I should like to express my appreciation to the member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes) for his fair, yes his generous, remarks about the services and their rather perplexing difficulties when face to face with the responsibility of carrying out a poll under service conditions. I thought both the remarks of the member for Nanaimo and the concluding remarks of the member for Peel illustrated that we are on the right track in setting up a committee to try to improve things if we can.

With regard to the service vote, everyone recognizes that service personnel are citizens. I happen to think they are very good citizens, and as such are entitled to vote. In the case of Greenwood there was no question but that all the service personnel who voted were entitled to vote somewhere. The only question was, were they entitled to vote at Greenwood where they cast their vote? And the question, of course, applies only to a minority of the men at Greenwood. I think hon. members who have taken the trouble to read the judges' report, or who have looked into the matter as carefully as I have through

[Mr. Graydon.]