

which is the basic requirement for voting under the Special Voting Rules, which form Schedule II of the Canada Elections Act.

As Hon. Members can see, there are divergent views as to the administrative challenge of putting this Bill into effect.

I do not want to take too long to discuss the fourth reason. I think the Charter of Rights speaks for itself. I do, however, want to quote again from the letter written to me by the Minister of National Defence. His point to me on the question of the constitutional right is worth having in our records.

I refer again to his letter of December 6, 1982 on the question of the constitutional right, Article 3. It reads:

Whether or not Article 3 of the Constitution 1981 will override the provisions of the Canada Elections Act and the Special Voting Rules, schedule II to that Act, is a matter which will have to be considered by officials in the Department of Justice and most probably eventually by the courts.

Will the Constitution of this country be a matter for consideration by officials in the Department of Justice? I do not understand, Mr. Speaker. The Minister goes on as follows:

—it would be difficult to recommend that a group of Canadian citizens employed locally by the Canadian Forces outside Canada, who are not subject to the Code of Service Discipline, should be given the right to vote at federal general elections without extending that same right to other Canadian citizens also employed outside Canada by other Government departments or agencies.

To that last point, I would like to add my support for a broader Bill. Possibly this Bill is too narrow in its application. It directs its impact toward Canadians working in Canadian Forces bases overseas. It could be that a committee, which would get a reference of this Bill, would want to extend that privilege to all Canadians, whether they are travelling on business or on pleasure outside of Canada at the time of an election. They would have the process at hand where they could go either to a consul or to an embassy to register themselves and be eligible to vote in a Canadian general election.

**Miss MacDonald:** Right on.

**Mr. Gauthier:** I do not think it is impossible for us to do that. I do not know that it would be difficult to have a permanent list that would allow us to do that. But I do think it would be a subject matter which would be of interest to all in the House and on which it would be interesting to hear the committee pronounce itself.

I do not want to take too much time because I would like to see the Bill referred to committee. In closing, I would like to thank those constituents and the people living in Lars who have written to me on this subject over the years. I hope for their sake that come the next election they will be able to exercise the democratic right of all Canadian citizens, namely, the right to vote in elections.

**Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this much needed Bill. I want to compliment the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) for presenting it. He is getting a reputation for doing some thinking on his own, a rare commodity on that side of the House, and I want to congratulate him.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Oh, come on.

### *Canada Elections Act*

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** When did you last have a thought?

**Mr. McKinnon:** This Bill will help considerably the lot of people who are serving their country overseas. At present those who are on the voters' lists external to Canada are the Canadian Forces themselves, their dependants, and also, to my recollection, External Affairs employees. Their names are all recorded on various voters' lists which are very well and capably handled in each election that I have seen. I simply cannot understand why on earth, if External Affairs can put their Canadian employees on a voters' list in an embassy in a foreign land, the Armed Forces cannot do the same thing.

There are many people serving with the Armed Forces, for instance, in Germany, besides their dependants. Many of the senior positions are civilian positions. There are accountants and newspaper editors. There are people who operate the Maple Leaf services, the shopping centres. They have managers and purchasing agents. There are people who operate automobile agencies. These people are all Canadians and they should be entitled to vote according to the Bill of Rights, if nothing else, which, incidentally, allows all Canadians to vote and makes no discrimination at all, even to age.

The present Act has been improved over the years but obviously it needs some further improvement. Each Member of Parliament now gets a special list of service voters and dependants, and the External Affairs people who mark themselves down as wishing to vote in the Member's constituency. I would like to see that extended to these other employees as well.

• (1730)

While talking about that list, I am sure many Members wonder along with me why the Department of National Defence cannot refer to Navy personnel by their ranks and save us all the embarrassment when we send something to a Major McKinnon, for example, who might be listed as being on HMCS *Gatineau*. When it is sent to Major McKinnon, it turns out he is a Lieutenant Commander. Not only is he mad, but you may have lost a vote. I am sure all Members would agree that this is an improvement which could be made to the Bill when it goes to committee, as I hope it does.

I agree with the Hon. Member who introduced the Bill that to say it is administratively extremely difficult to do something is not a good enough reason to disenfranchise Canadians who are serving their country. I hope that this Bill will not be talked out by the Liberals and that it will go to committee.

**Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on Bill C-669, which is an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act. I too would like to commend the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) for his independent thinking and his persistence with regard to this particular issue of extending the vote to those who are serving our country overseas. I would certainly echo the sentiments expressed by the previous speaker that, hopefully, the Government Members will not talk this Bill out, although I know they will.