

Mr. HOWARD: I am wondering if Mr. Castonguay could outline under this absentee voting system exactly what is the method of registration of voters, and the manner in which the ballot that a person casting an absentee vote in his home electoral district is checked, to show that the person who voted was the person who should have voted, and so on?

Mr. CASTONGUAY: There is a basic method with the absentee vote. First, we have a permanent list that was adopted in 1934. There was a general enumeration in October, 1934 to compile a basic list.

In June, 1953 there was a revision, and that revision ended on June 30. From that day onwards there was no means of making any amendment in the electoral list. If a voter became ineligible there was no means to remove names from the list of people who had left the country and who had moved to a new electoral district, or of people who had died.

The election arrived in October, 1935, and I think it would be a fair comment to make that it did not give any satisfaction to any political party, because they all came back to Ottawa after the election, and I think the report of the committee in 1938 was unanimous, that the Franchise Act should be repealed, and that we should return to our present system. I would say that the method used then was the basic method used in all absentee voting. First there is the normal safeguard which we did not have in 1934. That is, a signed application to be on the list. With that signed application there is a check to verify the signature on the ballot which is included in an absentee vote. Some people maintain it is not an adequate check because not all returning officers are handwriting experts. It is, however, the system which has been used in all countries. There is the check against the signature contained in the postal envelope containing the absentee ballot.

If an elector presents himself at a polling station as a miner, fisherman or lumberman, he then is given a ballot. He writes in the name of the candidate on the ballot in the electoral district in which he believes he is qualified to vote. He marks that ballot in the poll, puts it in the envelope, signs his name on the back of the envelope and drops it in the ballot box. When the ballot box was returned to the electoral officer of the electoral district, he took out the envelopes and mailed them to the various returning officers. When the returning officers received them, the only check they had was to see whether or not the name was on the list. There was no check on this particular occasion, which is very important, of looking at the poll book to see whether or not anyone had voted in his name. That is another safeguard in absentee voting, that the poll book must be examined by returning officers to see whether that candidate has voted or whether someone had voted in his name. If so, that ballot is rejected.

Another system is comparison of the signature on the envelope against the signature on the ballot. There is another weakness of the 1935 system. Mind you, these are opinions I formed from the experience of my father and my predecessor. As you know, with the permanent list it is a closed list. People in urban areas are used to closed lists. At that time, however, there were roughly four million people voting under the rural procedure which, as you know, is very flexible. If a person's name is not on the list, all he has to do is get a qualified elector who is on the list and have him vouch for him.

In 1935 the rural population was faced with a closed list. That was not at all satisfactory to the rural population.

Mr. BELL (*Carleton*): They did not like it.

Mr. CASTONGUAY: The failure of the 1935 system, I would say, would be attributed to the fact that they adopted only 50 per cent of the working methods of a permanent list. All countries which have a permanent list have