

Canada Elections Act

difficulty involved in travelling to remote areas in the provinces on election day.

There is another matter of concern to me in this regard, a problem which involves fishermen. A great number of them have been disfranchised during the years because there is no provision for absentee polls, except in the case of servicemen. There is no transferring of a ballot to take care of the situation which exists when people are required to be away from home on election day. Certainly the advance poll system is a step in the right direction; but in this day of great mobility many people other than clergymen are obliged to move around the country.

We should always be concerned about any move which will increase participation in the election process. My colleague, the hon. member to my right, has just handed me a note which would indicate that because of the provisions of the Canada Elections Act he was deprived of his vote during the last election. I do not suppose he minds too much, because he received a vote of confidence in that neighbouring riding.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Another thing we might look into when we are examining this whole aspect of elections, as was suggested by the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) in his very articulate and eloquent manner, is the matter of election expenses. I think we should do a great deal more in this regard. While we are discussing generally the provisions of the elections act, it seems to me—and I certainly agree with the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman) on this point—that many of our procedures under the act are anachronistic. One that comes to mind, and there are a number of problems associated with it, is the matter of a poll clerk being required to live in the riding in which he acts on election day. This causes a great deal of difficulty, and the chief electoral officer has refused to issue warrants in order to pay poll clerks who worked on election day but were not resident in the riding.

Once upon a time, when everybody knew everybody else in the rural areas, the matter of identification was important. I think it is irrelevant in an urban riding. I shall not prolong this line of argument, Mr. Speaker, because I see you are getting ready to call me to order. I shall get back to the central point on the bill, because I think it would be in order to proceed with this matter forthwith. It appears to me that there is unanimous, or almost unanimous agreement on both sides of

[Mr. Rose.]

the house that this small step might be proceeded with, and with the utmost despatch. I close by saying that I hope there will be no further speakers on this bill and that it will be allowed to come to a vote.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rose: May I also say that as a new member of parliament, with minimal experience here, there seems to be a great deal of wasted effort associated with private members public bills. While we are considering a review of our parliamentary procedures I think we might also consider the question of the disposition of these bills. Many of them are very interesting and enlightening, but it seems to me that the only prospect for most of them is to be talked out. If we are looking for one way in which to improve our parliament, it might be to suggest some disposition of private members bills other than that of being talked out. I hope the question will be called on this bill and that the house will pass it.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the mover of the bill a question. What does this bill do to a college student who is resident at a college or university at the time of enumeration, who completes his session at the college before voting day and in the ordinary course of events would return to his home constituency and would not be at the university or college on election day? What would this bill do, if passed, in such a situation?

Mr. Deachman: Mr. Speaker, if I understand the hon. gentleman's question correctly, we are dealing with the case of a student who has been enumerated, whose term ends and who then returns to his constituency. I think when we reverse the process of what we have been discussing this afternoon, we find that the student has been, under the act, as would be the case following my amendment, registered to vote at the university and not at his own residence elsewhere in the country. In that case he would find himself again disfranchised, I presume. All the amendment does, as I see it, is to provide the simplest way of enfranchising those who were disfranchised by this peculiar situation in 1965, by including them as a class with clergymen and teachers moving to new positions.

Mr. Stanfield: I am very happy to participate in anything to enfranchise students who were disfranchised in 1965, but I am very unhappy to be asked to take part in passing a