

*Dominion Elections Act*

method of government and substitute therefor certain systems under which we would not have any election act as we understand it, I think it devolves upon us, and the responsibility becomes just that much heavier, to see that we try to conduct ourselves on a high plane in democratic elections in Canada and in other democratic states throughout the world.

I really wanted to mention two details which the committee in their wisdom might decide to deal with. One is the question of providing advance polls, as suggested by the hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Pearkes). I think there are many of us who feel that there ought to be more provision for advance polls in our ridings. I am rather inclined to think that the act might be widened a little to take in others who are not presently included so far as the right to vote at an advance poll is concerned. It is rather limited in its application at the present time. Because of people having to travel, because of numbers of people living in places other than where they are working, it seems to me we might widen the provisions of the present act to allow certain other classes to vote at advance polls, and to try to arrange for such polls in every riding if at all possible.

I should like to make one other observation in that connection. In many ridings there are a great number of commuters, hundreds of whom use railway trains. In the House of Commons there must be at least thirty or thirty-five members, and perhaps more than that, who do not represent city ridings but ridings that are not too far away from cities, and the people in their constituencies are able to commute in and out to work. With our present hours of voting many good citizens are prevented from utilizing their franchise at all. In some instances in urban constituencies people are given two hours to vote, but so far as the commuter is concerned very often it means the loss of a whole day's work if he is going to vote at all. If he must travel by train for thirty, thirty-five or forty miles to get to his work he has to leave before the poll opens and cannot possibly return before it closes. So I think the committee ought to consider some provision whereby this very responsible section of our people may not be disfranchised by reason of any such obstacles put in their way.

Then I wanted to mention those who may be incapacitated by reason of illness at the time of an election. I know I am treading upon dangerous ground when I mention that subject, because if we were to open the door as wide as we might wish, having in mind some individual cases of which we have knowledge, we might find ourselves in the

position of almost providing curb service for the people in connection with the exercise of their franchise. None of us would want to go anything like that far, I am sure; nevertheless where we have large numbers of people in hospitals and similar institutions, where the practical obstacles would not appear to be too great, I do believe we should provide some service which would permit them to record their votes. I am quite sure our hospital population on any given date would amount to a sizeable figure, and I do not think those people should have insult added to injury, if I may so express it, by not only suffering the inconvenience and pain of illness but by losing their franchise as well. I should like to see this committee discuss that matter and deal with it as they may see fit. I have no further suggestions to offer in that regard. I know many doubts will be expressed as to the practicability of such a proposal; nevertheless I believe the matter should be fully aired, and if there is some practical way by which it can be done then I think those of our people who are ill on election day should be given the opportunity of exercising their franchise in the normal way.

My last point is in connection with the polling of the maximum number of votes on election day. Members of parliament and men and women actively interested in the political realm generally wonder why people do not get out to vote in larger numbers; but of course all people are not as interested as members of parliament, candidates and those taking part in the work of an election. Very often when we have a particular interest we think everyone else should have the same interest. Unfortunately that is not the case, though a strong argument might be advanced that after all our people should have no greater interest than their interest in our democratic processes, and I subscribe to that argument. But I think we must recognize the public's position as well as our own. I remember a friend of mine, who did not belong to my political faith, once saying to me, "I cannot understand it. At a gathering the other night none of my friends knew anyone by name in the House of Commons except two cabinet ministers."

**Mr. Knowles:** Which two?

**Mr. Graydon:** I think he mentioned the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe), and I took him for two. I replied, "I would not worry too much about that. The public cannot be expected to take an interest in everything; they have not time." I went on to ask him what church he belonged to, and he said the United Church. I said, "Well, you should be interested in your own church."