

Government Orders

Of course this bill is a first step. It is a bold step and one that I look at with great enthusiasm. I think it is timely.

I do not know what else can be said. When one runs out of ammunition it is better to just move on, fold your tent and sit down. On that note I will do just that. I am delighted to see the bill come forward and I am delighted to see the government moving ahead with this bill. I want to congratulate the cellular industry in Canada which has done an outstanding amount of work. I am very proud of them.

It is probably the first time all of the major cellular telephone companies in Canada have come together to set up a strategy to help users get the maximum benefit from the system. There is some fine tuning that needs to be done but they are doing just fine and I am proud of them.

• (1905)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Departmental envelope.

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CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Gerry Weiner (for the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved that Bill C-114, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Departmental envelope.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 73(3), I move:

That the motion for second reading of Bill C-114 be amended by having the bill referred to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform rather than a legislative committee in the Departmental envelope.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, now that I am no longer Whip perhaps I will speak on debate a little more often. It is something for the House to contemplate.

It is a particular pleasure this evening to be in the position of making the lead speech on Bill C-114, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act. I say that for two reasons. There is probably nothing that we do in this Chamber that is more fundamental to the continuation of our form of government, our democratic system of dealing with people, than to consider the issue of the Elections Act and how the people are chosen to sit in this Chamber to act on behalf of the Canadian people.

If we do it wisely and well, then democracy is enhanced. If we do it badly, then democracy is bruised and hurt. Hopefully history will say that the package of amendments before us for consideration in Bill C-114 plus other work to be forwarded to this House by our committee will turn out to be measures that have helped our sense of democracy and their importance in our system of government.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform. Its members worked very hard for approximately 28 months, from November 1989 to February 1992. There were five commissioners in all and they produced perhaps one of the largest royal commission reports in Canadian history.

The basic summary information of the commission's findings is contained in four volumes. These are augmented by over 20 research volumes, not all of which have yet been published. The work they did was substantial. The research work that they commissioned and had performed on their behalf will constitute research material in universities for decades to come. The report really was an extensive body of work.

Because there were 275 recommendations and because there was such a large volume of reporting, the House in its wisdom determined in February 1992 that it was wise to set up a House of Commons special committee to examine the royal commission report and to make recommendations to the House as to what actions it should contemplate and take.

The committee was set up one year and one month ago. I had the honour to chair that committee, and it has indeed been an honour. It has also been a pleasure because of the degree of co-operation we have had