

Adjournment Debate

The issue of overseas voting has a long history. The Government's White Paper on election law reform points out, for example, that a recommendation to extend the franchise to Canadian citizens living abroad for voting in general elections was made by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections as long ago as June 30, 1981, and again on June 26, 1984.

The Government announced its approval of the extension of the franchise to overseas voters in the White Paper. Further, it provided detailed proposals for a complete revision of the special voting rules contained in Schedule II of the Canada Elections Act. It is these amendments, with some additions, which are contained in Bill C-79.

The proposal made by the Member for Kamloops-Shuswap for extending the right to vote to more Canadians abroad is a good one, but it is not complete. For example, there is no provision to indicate how voters already abroad would make a statement of ordinary residence to indicate where their vote should be assigned. This step is now done automatically for Armed Forces and public service personnel and their dependants living abroad.

Under the present special voting rules the small number of Canadians now eligible to vote abroad do so at their base if they are in the Armed Forces, or at their respective unit or post if they are diplomats or other public servants living abroad.

This special voting procedure is adequate for the present population of Canadian voters abroad. In fact, under Bill C-79 it will be continued for Canadian Forces personnel overseas. However, the administrative difficulty of handling the much larger population of Canadian voters abroad who will soon be enfranchised through the present voting system would be too great.

According to estimates by the Department of External Affairs the number of Canadians residing abroad in 1983-84 was approximately 2.3 million. That represents almost 10 per cent of Canada's population. It is for this reason that a new system of voting by mailed ballot is proposed to replace the present special voting rules for all Canadians other than Canadian Forces personnel living outside of Canada.

Canadians will be eligible to register for voting abroad up to 10 days following the issue of the writ under the proposed Bill C-79. The voters' lists for Canadians abroad will then be closed to ensure that there is ample time for the sending and return of mailed ballots. To accommodate the procedure of mailed ballots there will be a longer voting period provided to overseas voters.

● (1800)

In essence, I think Bill C-268 is unnecessary because Bill C-79 will deal with what the Hon. Member has in mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has

expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 42(1), the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 66 deemed to have been moved.

IMMIGRATION—SENATE COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON TERRORISM

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Madam Speaker, during this past summer I had a visit to my constituency office from a delegation representing the survivors of the Air-India crash that occurred over two years ago. They wanted to point out to me their concerns about the fact that under our current immigration laws they believed it was easy for known terrorists and potential terrorists to enter Canada and cause us problems.

That was an understandable concern on their part, bearing in mind the fact that the Air-India crash had occurred years ago now and, in spite of at least two investigations and an ongoing investigation by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, no one has been convicted of the bombing of that aircraft, no one has been arrested or even charged in connection with the bombing of that aircraft. Therefore, the feelings of the survivors of that Air-India crash are certainly understandable.

They are not the only ones who expressed their concerns to me about immigration and refugee laws and procedures with respect to terrorists and potential terrorists. Many other people expressed those same concerns to me last summer. In fact, one of my good friends, a leader of the Italian community in Toronto, Sabastiano di Lorenzo, expressed those same concerns. In fact, on the day before Parliament was recalled for its emergency session, he indicated to me that he expected to see and hear me speaking out on this issue on his behalf and on behalf of all his friends and neighbours who felt the same way.

That is also not surprising in view of the fact that at that time 174 people had just landed on the coast of Nova Scotia. Many of them did not have any identification papers and there was evidence that those who apparently had identification papers at one time destroyed them when they landed. Therefore, there was a concern growing out of that situation.

Furthermore, the concern was also being expressed because of a report that was released at that time. It was the report of the Senate Special Committee on Terrorism and public safety. That report, which was released in July of this year, outlined the problem of international terrorism and pointed out that in Canada between 1960 and 1985 there were some 351 acts or threats of violence by terrorist groups in Canada against Canadian targets. At the same time, between those years 1960,