

*Canada Elections Act*

district where they were living where that was other than their home constituency, at the time of the advance polls and on November 8.

Perhaps I might explain what took place in my own constituency in order to clarify the situation. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the writ of election was issued on September 8. At this time enumeration began to take place, and most university students had not yet moved into the university towns or into residence at the universities. However, resident students at universities were in residence at the time of the advance poll and were registered at universities when the election actually took place. According to the elections act, however, they should have been resident, registered and in attendance at university when the writ was issued on September 8. They were thus disqualified from voting in that election.

The University of British Columbia is located in my constituency of Vancouver Quadra. Today there are about 15,000 to 16,000 students at that university. I do not know how many of them are qualified to vote, but I would estimate at least 2,500 to 3,500 of those students are 21 and qualified electors. These young Canadians, although 21 years of age and looking forward to voting for the first time, were not able to cast their ballots in that election.

One of the peculiar situations which arose, and which put even more sting into this situation, was the fact that commonwealth students were able to vote. At the University of British Columbia, we have many students from the West Indies, from Africa, from Hong Kong, from India and Pakistan. Under the provisions which qualify a person from the commonwealth as an elector in Canada they were able to vote because they had established a residence in Canada. Most of these students do not go home during the summertime and, in fact, remain in Canada for several years until they complete their education. Under the elections act, they were qualified electors.

We had a situation where some young man or woman from Kamloops, Nelson or Prince George, who was 21 years of age and born in Canada, would go to the University of British Columbia but be unable to vote, while commonwealth students were qualified to vote if resident in that constituency.

**Mr. Lambert:** May I ask the hon. member a question? Where was the normal place of residence of these commonwealth students?

This is one of the difficulties. The comparison between third or fourth year students from the commonwealth and students within the province, is not acceptable.

**Mr. Deachman:** I think I shall come to some of these points as I move forward. I recognize this to be one of the difficulties. I do not believe the hon. member, or any other hon. member, wants to find Canadian university students who are of voting age when the election takes place and resident in a university, unable to take part in the election, while commonwealth students at the same university are in a position to cast their ballots. I do not believe he wants to see such a provision remaining on the statute books.

The statute now provides that if these students want to vote they have to go home 300 or 500 miles, cast their ballot and come back. This is not a situation which we, as Canadians, want to see in our universities today. The purpose of Bill No C-100, therefore, is to bring about a simple change in the act which will not allow this to happen again. My solution to the problem, I feel, is a relatively simple one. Under subsections 6 and 7 of section 16 of the Canada Elections Act, ministers and teachers may move into a new constituency at any time in the interval between the date of issuance of the writ and polling day and register as voters. It would appear that the student franchise problem is easily solved if this same privilege that is granted to ministers and teachers were extended to students and they were deemed to be residents of the electoral district in which they have temporary residence at the time of the election.

This situation came to light very forcibly in my own constituency where there are so many students, and I know it came to light also in many other areas of Canada. At that time I began to look around for a solution to this problem. One way I found that the question could be approached was through the Chief Electoral Officer. Under section 58(2) of the Canada Elections Act, you may approach the Chief Electoral Officer, if you have been a candidate, with any amendment or suggestion you have respecting the electoral law. I should just like to quote section 58(2) which reads as follows:

● (5:10 p.m.)

Every candidate at any election and every official agent of any candidate has the right to send to the Chief Electoral Officer in writing any complaint he may have to make with respect to the conduct of the election or of any election officer, and to suggest any such changes or improvements in the law as he may consider desirable—