

*Private Members' Business*

In my party's presentation, we recommended that various locations within each electoral district be established similar to courts of revision where urban voters left off the list could vote rather than complicate the often confusing E-day at a polling station, particularly in the dying hours of the day. We all know what it is like at a polling station. In some polling stations there is absolute chaos. People are dashing in at the last minute. It has been raining for four hours and they are on their way home from work and there is a tremendous backlog of people waiting to vote. This could add to the confusion.

If this does not happen, specific and widely known advertising of this change would have to be a must.

That is one problem we see with it. It is not an insurmountable problem and it is not one that would cause me to vote against this specific piece of legislation.

Also, as the bill proposes, having just a photo and an address seems a little odd as well. I do not know how far that goes to identifying a person in a reasonable way as being a voter in that particular polling subdivision or, indeed, in that electoral district.

Bill C-286 does ameliorate a major fault in the Canada Elections Act that left thousands of eligible voters without a vote on election day. By lumping in urban voters with rural voters it creates more problems though for rural voters than exists now in some of those rural areas that I mentioned a few minutes ago.

First, before the royal commission, my party recommended that the section requiring rural voters to be vouched for be deleted. For example, in a riding as remote and as huge as the riding of Churchill in Manitoba, it is sometimes not easy to find someone whose name is on the voter's list to accompany you to the polls. It is just impossible. As I say, you may be living in that typical Canadian cabin out there in the wilderness.

Similarly, the requirement for ID creates a problem for those living in remote areas that is even more difficult to overcome than finding someone whose name is on the list to go with you to the polls. Many residents in a riding such as Churchill for example have yet to see a photo ID. Often a birth certificate or a social insurance number is the only identification they have. As neither have their address on them, this would disenfranchise many rural voters in that kind of riding.

It is my party's feeling that there ought to be a distinction in the act that takes into consideration the inherent differences between urban and rural areas as I have just described above. Rural voters should be allowed to go to the polls alone, take an oath or affirm and vote. They should not have to be vouched for. Second, urban voters because of the higher probability of fraud and misrepresentation must be covered under a different set of rules. This bill is directed strictly at allowing disenfranchised voters to vote but with enough precautions to prevent people who do not live in that poll or riding to cast an illegal ballot.

• (1140)

I will not take up any more time of the House. This bill, I think, is reasonable as far as it goes. I have made a couple of suggestions here where I think it may be improved upon.

I would hope that this bill, along with the commission on elections, will do away with the anomalies that presently exists, the unfairness that exists, and make it possible so that every one who really wants to vote on election day has an opportunity to vote.

As far as a permanent list is concerned, often we in a chamber such as the House of Commons or the provincial legislatures seem to think that everybody is as dedicated to the electoral system as we are, that everybody is as concerned about politics on a 24-hour a day basis as we are. Not all Canadians are political junkies as we are. Often, during an election campaign, they see the ads, they listen to the radio, they may even follow the local campaign, but often they do not really get interested or excited about it until the dying innings, like last night. It was one of the most fantastic baseball games I have ever had the pleasure of watching. I was fascinated from the first inning on.

In an electoral contest, often people do not start to get excited until the dying days of the campaign, indeed the dying hours in some instances. Any kind of electoral voting law has to be flexible enough to take that fact into consideration that often people do not get turned on or tuned in or excited in an election campaign until the very last remaining days. I would hope then, even at the last moment, if they choose at the last moment to go and vote, that is their right. They do not have to choose a week or ten days ahead. It is their right to change their mind at the last moment in a free society and go and vote. They should be able to vote at that last hour.