

*Supply—Secretary of State*

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a word or two about the item which concerns the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. This office was held for a long time by a highly esteemed man, a man who gained the respect of every successful and unsuccessful parliamentary candidate. I think the office should be filled forthwith. It is not good to have this important office vacant, especially in a country that has had such a plethora of elections as we have had in recent years.

● (9:50 p.m.)

I should like to say further, Mr. Chairman—

**An hon. Member:** You are too truthful, Judy.

**Mr. Peters:** You are getting some help with your speech.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Yes, by this little contretemps between the lovely lady and this gallant gentleman.

I will continue. There is another matter of importance which I should like to bring to the attention of the minister at this time. I believe the elections act requires urgent and most careful scrutiny with a view to some far sweeping changes. We have had the habit in Canada of revising the elections act after an election. We have learned, I am sure, many things from the last few elections. The disenfranchisement of the students, for one thing, is very important and the disenfranchisement of many Canadians abroad, not only those in the Department of External Affairs, who do not have the opportunity to vote. There is the whole question of people who are out of their own area, and perhaps out of the country temporarily.

We could provide, I think, the necessary mechanism, if we moved toward the permanent voters list. I think this is an underpinning for absentee and proxy voting. Many persons believe the voting age should be lowered. I am one of those, but some of my colleagues do not belong to that group.

I should like to say to the minister that I believe the committee on privileges and elections should be activated as soon as possible, because there is a great deal of work to do in scrutinizing the act. I had the honour of presiding over the committee on privileges and elections the last time it held its sittings. We had many long meetings, long discussions and deliberations. I think the time is ripe for action in this regard. We must move toward having our democratic machinery up-dated. I

do not think it is a good thing to have a vacancy in the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, and have an act which has been allowed to grow out of date.

Following the precedent set by the member for Royal, I will indulge in brevity and postpone my voluminous remarks until the next time I have an opportunity.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the member for Queens a question. Does the hon. member for Queens think that the time for holding elections should be reduced to 30 days rather than 60 days as it is at the present time?

**Mr. Macquarrie:** I believe, with a permanent list, it could be done in 30 days.

[Translation]

**Mr. Latulippe:** Mr. Chairman, I have only a few remarks to make—I will not be long—about broadcasting in the constituency I represent.

My constituency has very bad service by way of broadcasting. For instance, at five and six o'clock in the afternoon, the frequencies are lowered and the power of private stations is lowered, so that the constituency is deprived of radio or French broadcasts in the evening. By lowering the broadcasting power of the private radio stations, it is impossible to tune in French stations. It is only possible to pick up American stations which are so powerful and take up all the power, so that it is impossible to get a single French word between five o'clock in the afternoon and eight o'clock the next morning.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation owns a small station, a small substation in the town of Mégantic. This small substation is much too weak, it is not powerful enough to serve the population, with the result that American stations overpower it and the small transmission station of the C.B.C. becomes worthless. Not one word can be heard all evening; all through the night the C.B.C. station does not operate because it is too weak to be heard above American stations.

In order to listen to radio programs in my riding, one has to tune in the Sherbrooke station, which serves part of the riding. Afterwards, one has to tune in the Thetford Mines station, serving another part of the riding. Later on, one has to tune in the St. Georges de Beauce station that serves another part of the riding, and a great part of the riding is still not covered, even though we have to tune in three stations to cover the whole riding. Nevertheless, a great part of the riding is left out.