

Canada Elections Act

present time. Of these, 296 are teachers and people involved in directing staff, and 13 are business administrators, audio-visual technicians, library technicians or administrative assistants. Of the 309 teachers and administrative personnel, 145 are single and 164 are married. There are 26 teaching teams or couples, which leaves a total of 138 spouses. I should like the minister to confirm that the 138 spouses of teachers and their sons or daughters 18 years of age or over will be included as Department of National Defence electors.

People attached to the educational staff of the Department of National Defence who are working abroad should vote in the constituency in which they lived before they left Canada. If this were not the case they would have an advantage that public service electors living abroad do not enjoy at the present time. It must be realized that many of these teachers are still in the employ of their school boards in Canada. Regardless of where they lived in Canada, if they are now attached to DND schools outside Canada, they are deemed to be DND employees and along with their spouses and children should be considered as DND electors.

Sometimes I think we get so involved in partisan debates in this House that we fail to see the real value of the issue at stake. I think it is to the credit of the members on both sides of the House that they have taken up the case of the 447 teachers and spouses living abroad. This does not include sons or daughters 18 years of age or older. We should actually be considering between 475 to 500 electors abroad who are Canadian citizens but who do not have a vote in Canadian elections. This is a great injustice. We sometimes hear the argument that many of these things are difficult to enforce, but there should be no trouble in this case.

Less than a month ago I visited the Canadian Armed Forces in Europe. I was told by military personnel there that there is absolutely no problem in adding these people to the voters list under the term "deemed to be DND electors." In its usual efficient way the Department of National Defence has a record of these employees, their spouses and children, so it is just a matter of adding them to the list of DND electors when they return to Canada.

We discussed earlier the subcommittee which I chaired last year as a member of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. I was not satisfied with the decision arrived at regarding the teachers at that time, and followed the matter up with members of the House. I had a motion ready to place before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections but was told there was a possibility it might be out of order because a certain amount of money would be involved in adding names to the DND electors' list and that it would therefore require the royal recommendation.

I put motion No. 17 on the order paper thinking it would be ruled out of order because of the need for the Royal recommendation, but was pleased that the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) saw fit to set down a government motion using my terminology. As a result, we have before us tonight a government motion with the

[Mr. Epp.]

royal recommendation. It has been supported by all parties, which is a demonstration of the democracy of this chamber.

Many efforts have been made in this area in the past, but the result of the debate is what counts in the end. In concluding, I should like to thank all hon. members who took part in the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order please. Am I to understand that, because of the similarity, the hon. member wishes to withdraw motion No. 17 from the order paper?

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation about withdrawing motion No. 17 if government motion No. 16 is adopted. As I have said, we become so involved in partisan politics that it is nice to see something achieved through unity. I am sure we all support the deputy House leader in this motion, and I hope we will have all-party agreement to adopt it this evening.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, we support this amendment and, with members of other parties, have been involved in discussion of it. We in the New Democratic Party are happy with this amendment as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. I understand from time to time people other than teachers and school administrators are hired under contract by the Department of National Defence and other departments to work overseas. This amendment should have included those people.

● (2152)

In late 1973, the Canadian National Railways, a Crown corporation, had a contract with the government of Iraq. A fair number of CN engineers and technicians were in Iraq in order to advise its government concerning the construction of a railroad. Those employees resided in that country for a year and lost their ability to cast a ballot during the 1974 election. I see no reason why every Canadian embassy and consulate could not be classed as an advance poll in order that the thousands of Canadians employed by Crown corporations, government departments and private corporations who have assignments overseas can cast a ballot, as is the situation in regard to members of the armed forces.

I hope members of the House will realize that the act should be amended in order to include the people to whom I have referred. I hope this is recommended to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections and eventually results in an amendment.

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, in the report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections dated April 29, 1976, there is a word of thanks to the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) and a number of other hon. members whose worth-while bills were adopted.

There was a great deal of co-operation by all parties in that committee. A subcommittee was chaired by the hon. member for Renfrew North-Nipissing East (Mr. Hopkins). Even