

Canada Elections Act

vote, whether or not he happened to be in the middle of an academic year or within the confines of the Dominion of Canada.

I suggest that the absentee voting system is the kind of thing that would embrace all of these categories of people. It strikes me that we suffer gravely from a lack of attention to the Canada Elections Act. Some of us during the preceding two parliaments have suggested and requested that the committee on privileges and elections consider amendments to it. Every election brings out all sorts of problems in respect of the machinery, and after three or four elections it is now time to consider seriously substantial amendments to bring this act up to date.

The hon. member is concerned about what happened to students in 1965; but there are other problems. We must look at the whole question of permanent lists. I do not believe the absentee voting system can work unless there is a permanent list. It is our job as legislators to be observant and to make sure that when an election is held it is held under circumstances allowing as many Canadians as possible, and without hardship, to exercise their franchise. Elections should be free and they should, in the sense of participation, be full. There is much we can do.

We must make improvements. We now have provisions whereby young men and women in the military forces may vote in any part of the world where they are stationed. It is suggested that this should also be true of individuals in the Department of External Affairs stationed outside the country. Why should these civil servants be disfranchised when people in military forces are able to cast a vote? This is an anomaly which can be corrected by the use of an absentee voting system. But this should not only apply to civil servants and military personnel, it should apply to people who are employed by companies such as Brazilian Light and Power, and stationed abroad. If they are still Canadians they should be able to cast a vote.

While I like what the hon. gentleman has suggested—and if a miracle happens and it comes to a vote I will vote for it—I am inclined to think he is moving one step in a direction in which we have to take several giant steps. I hope he will use his great influence within the Liberal caucus—perhaps within a committee of 35—to see whether we can get the Canada Elections Act referred to the appropriate committee. After the last election, when these things are fresh in our minds, we should give appropriate attention

to a thorough consideration of this act and the machinery provided by it.

Mr. Deachman: I hope the hon. member will not mind my reminder that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, in support of what I think is a rather innocuous amendment, I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra and indicate that he has my complete support. One of the difficulties of being the third speaker is that the ideas one wishes to express have usually been expressed before. This makes these expressions redundant and repetitive. Perhaps this is not true of a new member of the house, or at least that is as it has appeared to me since my arrival.

I thought the mover of this bill was going to be guilty of talking it out, but he did give us a very thorough explanation as to why this amendment should be made. He also suggested that because his riding embraces the University of British Columbia this matter was of particular concern to him. He referred to the disfranchisement of students on that campus, where the enrolment is between 17,000 and 18,000.

The hon. member felt there was an anomalous situation in that many of these young persons who were eligible to vote for the first time were deprived of that privilege. I support him, in that some arrangement might be made so that university students away from home may vote at election time, between the date of the issuing of the writ and the election date. They should not be deprived of this right, and something should be done to correct the situation.

The hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra seemed happy to think that most of these young people at the university would vote for him. I know I will be forgiven if I suggest that a great number of them may vote for the N.D.P. candidate. I am sure the hon. member will not criticize me for taking this view.

He mentioned the 1965 election, which was held on November 8, and suggested that a calamity occurred at that time. A great number of university students were disfranchised at that time because they had moved from their homes to the university for the purpose of registration. A similar problem occurred during the last election. On April 23 the writ was issued and a number of students were at university at the time of enumeration. They were deprived of their vote because of the