

had to sit up late at night in Manitoba to see what happened in British Columbia before we knew what the result would be.

I think it is not beyond our wit to find some way in which to vote as a nation from coast to coast. I have seen other ideas besides this one and the one I suggested. Certainly we would be prepared to agree that the subject matter of this bill be referred to committee. The same applies to the other suggestions by the hon. member. When that committee meets there will be quite a few suggestions, and these are all in line with the general practice of reviewing the Canada Elections Act within a year or two of the experience of a general election.

We thank the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra for bringing these ideas before us. If I am right in my prediction that we will have a motion to refer the subject matter, we shall support it.

Mr. D. M. Collette (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I should like to join with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in commending the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Clarke) for bringing this bill forward. Most private members' bills deal with a singular issue and are very short, but this is a bill with a number of clauses. It has been extensively well researched. It has been well thought out and we have no hesitation in joining the sentiments expressed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in that the subject of this bill should be referred to committee.

● (1720)

Obviously we are not in a position to allow the bill to proceed past second reading because, as the hon. member points out, it is a tradition following a general federal election that this matter is considered in great depth by members of this House upon a report made by the Chief Electoral Officer, and he has informed me that he will be bringing forward later this year his report based on the last election.

The value of this bill is that the Chief Electoral Officer, being a servant of this House, is in a difficult position in making recommendations for changes in voting procedure or behaviour. It is really the initiative of members of this House that should dictate any changes in the Canada Elections Act; he has only to advise.

I see merit in the substance of this bill. I am not committing the government to any of the changes in this bill, but the situation as outlined by both the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre concerning the polling hours is perhaps something members on all sides should deal with because it does cause a problem.

My hon. friend from Vancouver Quadra talked about the 1972 election as being an exception whereby the western results made a difference. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre could remember earlier ones. I certainly remember the 1979 election when, yes, the fate of the Conservative government was decided, but it was not until we got the results from Manitoba that we realized that it more likely would be a minority government. So in that sense the votes did very much

Polling Station Hours

count in Manitoba. We hear a lot about votes not counting but obviously all votes count. Nevertheless, it must have a profound effect on the voter in western Canada after the polls close in eastern Canada to have the results either by cable television, which is not subject to the regulations now in force concerning broadcasting, or, as the hon. member said, from U.S. outlets. So I think there is something in the point made by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra although I am not necessarily agreeing with what he has proposed. We can certainly deal with this when it gets to committee.

The other sections dealing with proxy voting, special voting rules, mobile voting places, etc., are also very worthy of study because there have been several comments made by government employees overseas that they have been disenfranchised for one reason or another. We are talking about a lot of people, but even if it is only one person, we are perhaps denying a right of Canadian citizenship, notwithstanding where that person may reside, because of service to the Government of Canada. This also applies to the Canadian Armed Forces personnel. Perhaps there could be some changes made there.

Without prolonging the debate any further, Mr. Speaker, I once again applaud the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra for bringing this bill forward, and if all hon. members agree I would move, seconded by the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery):

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-237, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Amendment (Mr. Collette) agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Shall the motion, as amended, carry?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Accordingly, the order is discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

[*Translation*]

I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At 5.26 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.