

#### COMPARISON WITH OTHER SYSTEMS

In the United Kingdom, despite some favourable comments on the system, the permanent list is far from being an ideal solution. We can see this if we examine the timetable involved. The list is reviewed each year and comes into force on February 16 for a period of one year and serves for all elections, national elections and council elections, ordered during that period. Thus, if an election is held in January many people are deprived of their voting rights in the sense that the list has gone stale in the meantime. The same system exists in France, where the list comes into force on the last day of February for one year.

Perhaps the best system of continuous electoral rolls is that existing in Australia, where, in addition to an annual revision, there is compulsory registration and where changes may be made to the list until the day an election is called, which is usually about 30 days before voting day. According to Mr. Castonguay, even though it is mandatory in Australia to register within 21 days following arrival at a new residence, 3 per cent to 5 per cent of the electors ignore this responsibility. Thus, if an election is held six months after the annual revision is completed, the list in Australia really is not up to date, and it probably would be worse in Canada because of the very great mobility of our population.

With our present system, that is to say, a specific enumeration for each campaign, the list is prepared only seven weeks before election day and there is provision for revisions on the nineteenth, eighteenth and seventeenth days before polling day; and in rural polling divisions an elector may vote, even if he is not on the list, by use of the vouching procedure. Apart from the question of the accuracy of a list, it would be very costly to establish a system like the Australian system. Mr. Castonguay, in his evidence before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, stated that "to establish the Australian system in Canada, it would easily take a minimum of \$1 per elector per year".

With 13 million electors it would cost at least \$13 million a year, as opposed to the expenditure, on an average in every three or four years under our present system, of approximately \$7 million to prepare the electoral list. Our system is certainly not perfect but it does offer the advantage that it permits the preparation of lists which are more up to date than those of any of the systems having continuous electoral rolls and at a lesser cost.

My final point on this is a reference to a comment made by a disinterested foreign observer, Mr. Richard Scammon, director of the Election Research Centre at the Government Affairs Institute in Washington, D.C., who appeared last year before the Ontario Committee on Election Laws. He was chairman of the President's Commission on Registration and Voter Participation, established by the late President Kennedy. Mr. Scammon stated before the Ontario select committee:

"When we were doing our work for President Kennedy five years ago, we had some occasion to look at the Canadian system. Quite frankly, I must confess, I think it is better than ours. I say this, not in the sense of flattery, but simply because the main purpose of any election system, registration of voters, must be to make the task of registration as simple as possible for the non-committed electorate...."

#### VOTERS WHO ARE LEFT OFF LIST

The second of the questions or criticisms to which I refer is why so many people have been left off the voting list....The real problem is that in the relatively short time available for enumeration (as I have already noted, some people even feel that time is too long) it is almost impossible for even the most intrepid team of enumerators to make certain, by personal visitation, that every eligible voter in an urban poll is on the electoral list.

I do not hesitate to say that in some cases the reason for an eligible voter being left off the list, in my experience, is his general indifference to the question until it is too late for him to be added under the revision system. I think a great many more are left off, not by indifference or intention but merely because of the basic difficulty in a relatively limited number of visits of contacting people who, by pure accident, might not be at their residence at the time of the call....

What seems to me, therefore, to be the best compromise under the circumstances is to remain with our present system of enumeration and revision and to seek through more extensive publicity by the Chief Electoral Officer and his appointees, through the public media at the relevant times - that is, at enumeration and during the revision period - to bring to the attention of electors the procedures followed in preparing the voters' lists and the steps that they should take to ensure that their names are on them. I know that the Chief Electoral Officer has been giving some attention to these questions of further and better publicity of the procedure under the Act during an election.

#### PERSONS LIVING ABROAD

The third of the criticisms to which I have referred is one expressed by Canadians who, whether in the line of duty or by personal inclination, find themselves living abroad at the time of an election. The Elections Act has for many years conferred on all members of the Canadian Forces the right to vote in Canadian elections notwithstanding the fact that they are serving abroad. The suggestion has been made that there are many other Canadians living abroad, whether in the line of duty or by inclination, who have not had the right to vote. These would include employees of provincial governments, employees of international agencies such as the United Nations, missionaries, people working voluntarily abroad such as CUSO volunteers, employees of Canadian firms