

Mr. HOWARD: Mr. Chairman, I would like to express one thought arising out of what appears to be the most general complaint—especially in smaller communities, which are invariably rural polls—where there is a community hall or a publicly owned building. The point has been made that in such cases the community hall should be used.

Mr. CASTONGUAY: The argument is the rent, and so on, would assist the community in financing and operating its own hall rather than using the D.R.O.'s home, which will be in many cases.

Mr. HOWARD: I can appreciate this is a problem for the returning officer, particularly; but I wonder if in the instructions that are issued concerning the finding of suitable places, whether that specific matter is dealt with or covered?

Mr. CASTONGUAY: No, it is not. The instructions give the returning officer full latitude to select whatever suitable premises there are in a polling division for a polling station. After all, the act gives him exclusive jurisdiction in this matter, and the instructions are all along those lines.

Mr. HOWARD: There is nothing in the instructions about specific types of facilities—schools, and things of that nature?

Mr. CASTONGUAY: No, none whatsoever.

Mr. HOWARD: Do you think that is something that should be drawn to the attention of, or a request made to the R.O.?

Mr. CASTONGUAY: To the returning officer locally.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions on this one?

The second letter on our list is one from Mr. Whitehouse, and deals with voting by civil servants employed overseas.

Mr. AIKEN: Mr. Chairman, looking through this summary of suggestions, I find the vast majority relate to this particular subject—that is, absentee voters. There are several in connection with civil servants and several others in connection with service men. Perhaps those could all be covered at one time, rather than going through them individually.

I am referring to items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7—practically all of them. We hardly need to go through them individually. No. 19 is registration of voters, and so is No. 20. No. 24 refers to the lowering of the voting age. A good many of them refer to this particular subject.

Mr. BELL (*Carleton*): Could we start by having Mr. Castonguay outline to us what the experience has been in Canada with regard to absentee voting? As I recollect, it was in the act at one stage—I believe, in 1935.

Mr. CASTONGUAY: Mr. Chairman, in 1934 the Franchise Act came into being, and it may be of interest to the committee if I were to read my predecessor's report on the use of absentee voting at that election. It was used, for the first time, in the 1935 election.

Mr. BELL (*Carleton*): And the only time?

Mr. CASTONGUAY: Yes, for the only time. It was limited to fishermen, lumbermen, miners and sailors only; and was only applicable within the provinces. If a miner from Ontario was employed in British Columbia he would not get privileges of absentee voting, because he had to be absent within his own province.

My predecessor, in his report to the House of Commons, made the following comments on absentee voting:

I was also called upon, on many occasions, to express an opinion with regard to absentee voting. This is the first time that there has been absentee voting at a dominion election. The procedure appeared to be