

It has also been suggested that sailors on the Great Lakes might be allowed to vote as absentee electors, as is done in the province of British Columbia.

A procedure of this kind would also require extensive amendments to the Dominion Elections Act. If sailors on the Great Lakes are allowed to vote as absentee electors, the same privilege would have to be provided for every other class of persons who are absent from their home polling divisions on polling day. Moreover, each of the 35,000 ordinary polling stations established in Canada would have to be provided with twice as many different forms and envelopes as they are now furnished, and a great deal of confusion would inevitably result. This is what happened at the 1935 general election.

At present, a deputy returning officer is furnished with no less than 30 different forms varying in number, and I do not consider it advisable that any deputy should be required to handle a larger number.

For the general election of 1935 the Dominion Elections Act provided a method of absentee voting. There were 5,334 absentee voters' ballots cast on that occasion, of which 1,533 were rejected. As stated in my report to the Speaker of the House of Commons after the 1935 general election, I am not in favour of the adoption of absentee voting at Dominion elections such as prescribed by Chapter 50 of the Statutes of Canada, 1934.

Unless the committee is prepared to recommend some very extensive amendments to the Dominion Elections Act, I do not see how it will be possible to provide special voting facilities to the sailors on the Great Lakes who are absent during long periods of time from their home polling divisions.

The CHAIRMAN: Now, gentlemen, with the statement in mind, and having section 37 in front of you shall the section carry?

Carried.

Now we go back to section 2 of the bill, having to do with the appointment of the office of chief electoral officer. There has been a suggested amendment which I shall read and ask someone to move. This is an amendment to the present bill

2. (1) Subsection one of section four of the said Act is repealed and the following substituted therefor:

4. (1) The Chief Electoral Officer shall rank as and have all the powers of a deputy head of a department, communicate with the Governor in Council through the Secretary of State of Canada, devote himself exclusively to the performance of the duties of his office and be paid a salary of not less than eight nor more than ten thousand dollars per annum to be fixed by Order of the Governor in Council. He shall be eligible as a contributor under and entitled to all the benefits of the Civil Service Superannuation Act but, until he has attained the age of sixty-five years and when he shall be compulsorily retired, he shall be removable only for cause in the same manner as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada.

(2) Subsection one of this section and subsection one of section four of the said Act, as enacted by subsection one of this section, shall become operative only upon the retirement of the person who is Chief Electoral Officer at the date of the coming into force of this Act.

(3) The person who is Chief Electoral Officer at the date of the coming into force of this Act, shall be paid a salary of ten thousand dollars per annum as from the first day of July, 1947.