

Private Members' Business

And I am sure many of us could rise in this House and say: Sure, I know a lot of people who couldn't vote because they could not get their names on the list.

So I think allowing someone to report to a polling station and having their names added to the list, subject to the conditions suggested by the hon. member, including a witness who can testify to the fact that you are really the person living at that address, and second, the requisite identification—I believe this would be entirely normal and fair.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I know it is a right for all Canadians. The member said that section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms says we have right to vote. Yes, we do have a right to vote and we should exercise it. We must take away those impediments that prevent Canadians from voting. Who else can do that better than the House of Commons here today by adopting the bill, getting out of the way and then letting things fall as they should.

I know there are other problems. I know there is a great discussion about a permanent list. Some people are for and others are against. I do not know what the Lortie commission will report on that. Some of us feel that that list could be used for other purposes than election purposes, for example. It could be a great lobbying tool. It could be a great list to use when sending out this third class mail that all of us do not like to get.

We have to think seriously of a permanent list. Possibly that is one of the options. However, today all we are talking about is allowing Canadians to register themselves on that list on election day if for any reason, justifiably, they could not register at the appropriate time, giving them the right to vote.

I think this is a great initiative. I want to end my comments by saying thank you very much to the member for Don Valley West.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief intervention to make on Bill C-286. I thank the member for Don Valley West for sponsoring this private member's bill.

There are a lot of things about our electoral system that I think need modernizing, upgrading and improving. I do not want to repeat what everyone has said so far this morning, but there is no question in all our minds that

the present system has to be reformed and improved upon.

There is nothing more depressing than banging wildly on doors on election day only to find out that a whole row of houses has been left off the voters' list, or a whole apartment building for that matter.

I do have one or two reservations about this bill and they concern the ID that is necessary in rural areas as proposed by the member's bill. When we talk about rural constituencies, we often think of the old kind of rural constituency, such as mine where you have concessions and where you have mainly farmers and farm families living in that rural area. We have a lot of other rural constituencies today where there is not one farmer, where you have woodsmen, where you have people working in mines, where you have people running small business operations on remote roads, not even highways, and where you have people who have chosen a very, very remote way of life in order to get away from civilization. It is very difficult in some parts of Canada for people living in those geographic locations to find someone to come and vouch for him or her in terms of identity. It is also very difficult to find people living that kind of lifestyle who have an ID with a picture on it or a combination of a picture on one ID with a second ID that actually gives a legal or a quasi legal description of where they live.

I think that kind of provision might need some fine tuning. For example, looking at the bill technically, it proposes changed by removing in section 147.(1) and (2)(a) the word "rural". Subsection (1) grants permission to someone to be vouched for if their name is not on the list providing they meet certain new criteria. Subsection (2) spells out the criterion they have to meet in order to vote. Subsection (2)(b) is new. It requires that in addition to being vouched for either: 1. a single proof of ID with a photo and address; or, 2. two pieces of ID bearing name and address must be shown.

While this amendment does take into account our party's recommendation to the royal commission on electoral reform and party financing, that urban voters be allowed to swear in on election day, we are concerned about where people could be sworn in. This is another problem that I find with this bill, good as the bill is as far as it goes.