

Senator Frith: Without their having to sit around for the rest of the day.

Senator Macdonald: There would be no difficulty in having that same poll, which I call a travelling poll, go to hospitals, which would do away with all of this proxy voting. They could set up the poll there and go round to the different parts of the building, allowing patients to vote in that way. I think this would be a most acceptable procedure. If there were valid objections to such a procedure being followed in large centres, where people would not be as well known as they would be in smaller centres, I suggest that the returning officers for each constituency be given some discretion in the matter so that they could get up such a poll if they wished.

There are other provisions of the act which could be examined with a view to allowing more proxy voting and more early voting.

Section 97(2) of the Canada Elections Act says:

(2) At a general election, any elector whose name appears on the list of electors for any polling division of an electoral district and who has reason to believe that he will be unable to vote on the days fixed for the advance poll and the ordinary poll may cast his vote in the office of the returning officer for that electoral district, before the returning officer or the election clerk (in this section referred to as the "presiding officer"), between the hours of twelve o'clock noon and six o'clock in the afternoon or between the hours of seven and nine o'clock in the afternoon on any day during the period beginning on Monday, the fourteenth day before polling day, and ending on the last Friday before polling day, except on a Sunday and any day fixed for the advance poll.

I believe that period could be extended so that more people could take advantage of it.

It might be said that all this would be too expensive. Perhaps it would be. At the same time I think that added expense could be offset to a considerable degree. Section 10 of

the act sets out the normal number of voters to a poll as approximately 250, and that is followed pretty strictly. If the number goes over that to any extent they divide it into two polls. That is ridiculous. In the ordinary course of events at least 10 per cent of the voters do not vote for one reason or another, and so the poll is not busy half the time. To my mind, any poll should be able to handle at least 350 votes in 11 hours. If it cannot, the deputy returning officer and the poll clerk are not up to their job.

Honourable senators, I have probably wandered quite far from Bill S-11, and have not mentioned government Bill C-58, which is also worthy of support, since that cuts down the number of days in an election campaign from 60 to 47. I think we should remember that all these discussions are useful. It may be that Bill S-11 and the others will not get too far before the end of the session, but I think we should remember that after every election the chief electoral officer makes recommendations to the government as a result of that election's shortcomings. I am sure the government will take into consideration anything we may say here with reference to the Canada Elections Act.

May I also say, honourable senators, that I am always impressed by the attitude of the Chief Electoral Officer and his staff. They are always available to give information during an election campaign. I recall that I spoke to the official agent of the candidate of my party in the last election, when it was over, and he spoke in the highest terms of the co-operation of the Chief Electoral Officer's staff. He told me that with regard to any problem or difficulty that arose all you had to do was call them and they gave you the answer; or, if they did not have the answer, they soon obtained it for you.

Honourable senators, I thank you for your attention. As I have already said, I am in favour of this bill, perhaps with a few changes.

On motion of Senator Macquarrie, debate adjourned.

The Senate adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.