

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to my despatch No. 232 of May 20th regarding the Referendum (Advance Poll) Act and the more general arrangements for the holding of the first poll in the national referendum.

2. There has now been passed an Act entitled "An Act to Amend the Referendum (Advance Poll) Act, 1948." Copies of this Act as gazetted are enclosed.[†] Its effect is to increase the number of districts in which an advance poll may be held from nine to seventeen, to expand the period during which an advance poll may be held, and to provide for more flexible voting hours. In six of the seventeen districts the advance poll commenced on June 25th and will continue until July 21st. These six districts are all located on the south and south-east coasts of Newfoundland. I understand that the advance poll is to be of a longer duration in these areas because most of the banking schooners sail from southern harbours, returning at long and irregular intervals for bait or to discharge their catch.

3. In the remaining eleven districts the advance poll is to commence on July 2nd and is to continue until July 21st. These districts include Labrador, two districts on the west coast of Newfoundland, two on the north coast, three on the north-east coast, one in the interior and two on the eastern part of the Avalon Peninsula — St. John's East, and Harbour Grace on Conception Bay. The object of the advance poll in these areas is mainly to give fishermen going to the Labrador, lumbermen, and persons travelling on pleasure and business an opportunity to vote.

4. About seventy-five polling stations were set up in Labrador when the first vote was taken and the same number will be used at the coming poll. A motor vessel is at present travelling up the Labrador coast, distributing ballot boxes, etc., to these polling stations and collecting the final returns of the June 3rd vote. There will be no advance poll at these stations, shore fishermen who have come up from Newfoundland and who have not voted in their home districts being expected to vote on polling day along with the residents of Labrador.

5. There will, however, be an advance poll of the fishermen who are fishing from schooners off Labrador. A motor vessel will shortly start down the coast with the object of coming alongside all the fishing boats between July 2nd and 22nd. The motor vessel will call in at places where schooners may be expected to anchor or where news of their whereabouts will likely be available. The poll which takes place on board this motor vessel may be held at any hour of the day or night.

6. A special polling station is to be set up on Belle Isle in a harbour where between twenty and thirty fishing schooners regularly anchor every day. This polling station will be open on July 22nd only, as it is thought all the schooners will be in the harbour at some time that day.

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9. The same persons who officiated at the June 3rd vote are being invited to take charge in the second poll. So far as the advance poll is concerned, the services of returning officers only are required, members of the Newfoundland Constabulary or of the Newfoundland Ranger Force assisting where necessary. For the main vote, however, the services of deputy returning officers, poll clerks,