

*Canada Elections Act*

National Railways Securities Trust and the auditors' report to parliament on the accounts of the Canadian National Railways system for 1967, all tabled on September 16, 1968, be referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

That the annual report for 1967 of Air Canada and the report to parliament of the auditors on the accounts of Air Canada for 1967, tabled March 14, 1968, be referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement for the minister to make the motion?

**An hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. This motion can be submitted to the house only by unanimous consent. There is not unanimous consent. I regret that the motion cannot be put.

**Mr. Ed Schreyer (Selkirk):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a point of order. It is my understanding of the rules that if an hon. member or hon. members refuse unanimous consent, one may ask that the name or names be divulged.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is not my understanding of the rules.

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT****SUGGESTED STUDY BY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PREPARATION OF LISTS, ELECTION EXPENSES AND OTHER MATTERS**

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, there are several matters relating to the election law that should be dealt with by parliament in this session. I should like to put before the house a suggestion as to how we might proceed.

Under the British North America Act a general election must be held by June 25, 1973. I understand that the Chief Electoral Officer will need upwards of 24 months between the time any extensive changes are made in the act and the time when the writ for an election is issued. This time is needed for the preparation, printing and distribution of the necessary forms and papers and for the instruction of election officers. Assuming that the next election is to take place at the last possible date—and that would be extraordinary—this means that the act should be ready about two years from now. I believe that hon. members in all quarters would want the act to be ready far sooner than that. I mention this point because it bears directly on how we should deal with the matters relating to the election law.

29180—466

Hon. members will recall that in 1963 the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections made an extensive study of the act, but whether or not, and how, some of the more important changes then considered could be made was found to depend almost entirely on the method to be used in the preparation of the lists of electors. Consequently, to secure adequate information on alternative methods of preparing the lists, a section was included in the Representation Commissioner Act to provide for the preparation of a report on that subject. That report was submitted to the Speaker in April 1968.

• (2:30 p.m.)

Four general elections have taken place since the revision of the Canada Elections Act in 1960. Undoubtedly there are changes which hon. members will wish to propose. Moreover the Chief Electoral Officer probably will have a number of improvements in the details to bring forward for consideration. Then there is the report of the Committee on Election Expenses made to the Secretary of State in 1966.

Finally, there is the statutory requirement that a review of the Representation Commissioner Act be proposed in the first session of parliament after 1968. It is my suggestion that since it was found in 1963 that any fundamental change in the method by which the lists of electors are prepared might require almost an entirely new act, we ask the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to deal first with the question of the method of preparing the lists.

It might be thought that the next step should be an examination of the proposed changes in the law relating to election expenses. However there is the time factor that I have mentioned already. I understand also that it would be possible to make changes in the election expenses provisions of the Canada Elections Act by a separate statute, and that these could be brought into effect without disrupting the time-consuming preparations which must be made by the Chief Electoral Officer. For this reason my suggestion is that after it has dealt with the method by which the lists are to be prepared, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections be asked to review the remainder of the act, exclusive of those sections relating to election expenses.

The next step, the third step, will be for the committee to deal with the election expenses proposals. Fourth, and finally, it would be called upon to deal with the review