

would obtain my information from the returning officer and I would go beyond him. I would go whenever or wherever possible to all the interested parties in the district to see what could be done. I would take steps to ascertain whether it was practicable or not. But still, there is that yardstick. What would constitute a yardstick to determine a disaster, and what yardstick would I use?

Mr. MURPHY: It may be that most of the members of the committee would agree that fifty per cent could be a disaster, and yet it might not mean fifty per cent of the polling subdivisions. I do not know how we are going to guide the officer who has to make the certification. I wonder if this section could stand over until we have given it some thought.

Mr. MACDOUGALL: In connection with this matter, I think it is very clear. Personally, I am quite prepared to ask for withdrawal of the amendment now because there is no one in this room who can define, even within his own riding, what may or may not constitute a disaster.

Take for example the case of the Fraser Valley flood. It was a terrific flood. Of course, I am only going on supposition, but in the areas immediately adjacent to both banks of the Fraser, I think the likelihood would be that there would not be more than three or four polls in that whole area adjacent to either bank of the Fraser which would be forced to close, by reason of the flood.

Consider, for example, an isolated area, for instance, in the northern part of any of the central provinces of Canada, let us say in Skeena or in northern Quebec or Ontario; you might have a complete isolation of one or two polls. The only way the Chief Electoral Officer can get his official information about it, on which he is going to base his decision, which decision will be handed on to the Governor General in Council, will be through the report of the Returning Officer who is right on the spot.

Candidly, to me this thing is as plain as a pike staff. He has to get his information from some one. And who is more reliable to give it than the returning officer who is right there on the spot?

Mr. HERRIDGE: It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that a much more accurate way of determining the nature and the effect of a disaster would be to take the percentage of voters who would not be able to exercise their franchise. For example, you might have 20 small polls affected in one case, yet in another case one poll alone will represent far more votes than did the 20 small polls.

In my opinion, if 25 per cent of the voters in any one district cannot exercise their franchise because of some disaster, that would be good ground for adjourning the election.

Mr. CANNON: I think the matter should be left to the judgment of the Chief Electoral Officer. But I think the figure he mentioned a while ago of 50 per cent is much too high.

If 25 per cent or even less were unable to exercise their franchise, I think it would be a good reason for postponing the election. After all, elections only take place once in five years or so. Everybody wishes to exercise their franchise if possible; and if there is any considerable portion of those able to vote who are deprived because of a disaster, I think the election should be postponed.

In short, I think it should be left to the judgment of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. FAIR: May I ask whether during the years of office of the Chief Electoral Officer he knows of any situation when it was necessary to postpone an election?

The WITNESS: There has never been a similar situation to my knowledge. I discussed this matter with my predecessor, and he does not recall any. But