

*Canada Elections Act*

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I wanted her to vote in the election too. The letter concludes:

Thanking you in advance for your interest and assistance.

I could not make the effort then, but I am making the effort now.

I noticed an advertisement in the Vancouver paper, *The Sun* that I happened to spot. It concerns the elections in Australia. It was an ad that was buried away in one of the advertising columns of the *Vancouver Sun*. It advertised for people to vote in the Australian election who would be away when the election took place. The ad was for people living in Vancouver who were Australian citizens. It outlined the voting procedure. I thought it was quite a good idea. I would like to see us to do something like that in Canada. I will bring that idea to the committee. Let me read the advertisement. It reads:

Election day is December 1, 1984.

A general election for the Australian House of Representatives, the Senate and two Referendums Questions will be held on Saturday, December 1, 1984.

● (1750)

A second heading in the article read: "Apply now for a postal vote" and continued as follows:

If you are enrolled on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll and you are travelling or are temporarily a resident in Western Canada and will not be returning to Australia before Election Day, you may apply for a Postal Vote.

Postal voting facilities and a list of candidates are available at the Australian Consulate-General, Vancouver—

Also included in the advertisement was a telephone number. I found that to be quite interesting. It is true, as my colleague said, that in Australia one is required to vote. My Bill does not require Canadians to vote. Actually, it does not provide for a postal vote. However, it tries to provide the same facilities as those provided for foreign service officers and armed services personnel to vote in federal elections. I think the same could be done for people residing abroad or for people travelling abroad when elections are held. That is one of the first provisions of my Bill.

The second provision is one to give urban voters the same rights as rural voters. There is a provision in the British Columbia Elections Act by which people can show up at the polls, show proof of their identity, and swear affidavits indicating that they were not enumerated but that they lived in the riding and should be able to vote. I believe that can be done under the Canada Elections Act if one is a rural voter. There is some controversy about it, although we have that provision in the Province of British Columbia and it appears to work in provincial elections. The controversy is that perhaps it would enable people to abuse the system. That may be so, but I would argue that we could prevent abuses by a proper procedure.

I have been at the polls, as I am sure other Hon. Members have been, when voters turn up, only to discover that they were not enumerated and could not vote. They feel badly about it, because Canadians generally take their voting rights very seriously. As the former Prime Minister used to say, "If you don't like me, you can throw me out at election time". It is one

of our real rights, perhaps the highest one, next to free speech. It is important that we make the vote as available as we can and on the widest basis possible.

I will point out in committee that if we have a different procedure for rural voters as opposed to urban ones in our present Canada Elections Act, it may be unconstitutional and against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I think the committee should look at it very seriously.

My third point in the Bill is a rather personal one. During the last election campaign, canvassers could not go into the Patricia Hotel in the riding of the Hon. Member for Vancouver East. People actually live in that hotel, many of whom are loggers who work in the woods and make the hotel their permanent residence. It was more like an apartment than a hotel. However, the manager of the hotel would not allow canvassers in. I telephoned him and told him that I was a lawyer and a Member of Parliament, that I would like canvassers to be able to go into the hotel so that its residents would have an opportunity to get all available literature, and that it would give us a chance to get their vote or to convert them, if they were thinking of voting for another Party. The manager said: "I don't have to let you in; show me the law". Thereafter I checked the law and discovered that there was nothing in the provincial Act or in the federal Act which would require him to let canvassers in. I telephoned him again to tell him that he was right and to appeal to him as a citizen of Canada, as someone who I expected shared my view that it was very important to have utmost freedom for the dissemination of political literature, freedom of speech and so on. I told him that he should let in canvassers and he said: "Too bad, I will not let them in". I told him that there was more than one way to skin a cat, that I would have to change the law. This is why I am particularly pleased to have the Bill before the House this evening. I will send a copy of it to that particular hotel manager.

I considered other possible issues to raise in the Bill. I did not raise one such issue because I thought there was opposition to it. Perhaps I will raise these points for discussion in committee. However, I notice that the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse) has Bill C-219, an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, on the Order Paper. He is asking for changes in terms of candidates who seek a leave of absence to run. I hope that matter will eventually come before the House as another issue pertaining to the Canada Elections Act.

I think the issue of public opinion polls should be raised. Should we continue to allow public opinion polls to be published during an election campaign? I noted that in the campaign last year it was important to have these polls. However, that issue was not raised in my Bill. Other issues would be shorter election periods and the right of prisoners to vote. Perhaps they could be discussed at another point.

I have made three simple amendments. I would be very pleased if they could go to committee to be discussed.