

*Canada Elections Act*

of the writ they were deprived of the opportunity to vote in the election in their university constituency, although they might have arrived there only a few days after the writ was issued, indeed while the lists were still open and while, under the elections act, there were opportunities for them to be enrolled.

This is the result of an anomaly in the elections act which deprives many young people of their vote for the first time when a situation such as the one which occurred in 1965 arises at the time of a general election. In my own constituency is located the University of British Columbia which today has a student enrolment in excess of 20,000 in regular courses during the winter months. At the time of the election of 1965, enrolment was in the neighbourhood of 16,000 students and we estimated that between 2,500 and 3,500 of them lost their votes because of the peculiarities of the elections act, to which I have referred. Today of course, with an enrolment in excess of 20,000 the number would be even larger, and across the country the number of students disfranchised would naturally be far greater still.

It is a peculiarity of the elections act that commonwealth students attending universities in Canada did, in 1965, have an opportunity to vote in that election, while many Canadians moving from their homes to the universities, did not. The circumstances are that commonwealth students, once they have gained residency after six months or a year—I do not have the act in front of me—are permitted to vote. Also it is the habit of many commonwealth students not to return to their home countries while they are pursuing their studies but to remain in this country for several years. So Canadian students saw their colleagues from commonwealth countries enfranchised, while they themselves were denied an opportunity to vote.

I wish to deal with what the act presently provides in the cases of clergymen and teachers, in respect of whom this problem has already been recognized. I refer to chapter III of the Canada Elections Act, revised statutes of 1952, section 16, subsection (7) which reads as follows:

• (5:10 p.m.)

For the purpose of a general election, any of the following persons who, in the interval between the date of the issue of the writ of election and polling day, changes his place of ordinary residence from one electoral district to another, is if otherwise qualified, entitled, if he so elects, to be included in the list of electors for the polling division

in which he is ordinarily resident at the time of his application, and to vote at the polling station establish therein, if,

(a) being a minister, priest or ecclesiastic of any religious faith or denomination, he is in charge of or permanently attached to an established place of worship or recognized mission of his church situate in the electoral district to which he has removed; or (b) being a teacher, he is employed under a contract with the appropriate educational authority and is engaged in teaching at a school situate in the electoral district to which he has removed.

So, the act already recognizes the problem in the case of ministers, priests or teachers who move from one electoral district to another to take up a new post. It is under subsection (7) that I believe we can make a very simple amendment which would take care once and for all of the problem of disfranchised students. I brought this little bill into the house after the incident of 1965, and it was debated in the house. I made every effort to determine whether or not this little amendment could be passed. Unfortunately the bill did not pass at that time. There was some debate about it and a number of bills were referred to the committee on privileges and elections.

Time has passed however, and here we are in another parliament. Nothing has been done about enfranchising the students. Therefore I am presenting my little bill again, one which contains a simple amendment. I am sure this amendment would not rock the boat of the chief electoral officer. I am also sure that it would correct the problem which faces students at the time of a September election.

I should now like to read to hon. members how I believe subsection (7) of section 16 could be amended. It would be necessary simply to add after the end of paragraph (b) another paragraph (c) which would read:

(c) being a student, he is duly registered and in attendance at a recognized educational institution, and for the purpose of this subsection such student shall be deemed to reside in the electoral district in which he has temporary residence and not in the electoral district in which he would otherwise have his ordinary residence.

This is a very simple amendment which could be made to the Canada Elections Act. I submit that it would not bring down the wrath of the Almighty on our heads, or cause any harm, and that, at last, it would allow students, after the procrastination in respect of the disaster of 1965, to be enfranchised. That is all I am pleading for this afternoon. In closing I should like to say that the Canada Elections Act is a curious old antique. It was written in the days of our fathers when