

much difficulty, and then the returning officer usually takes two days, at the most, to hold a meeting or seminar where the enumerators are instructed in their duties. This system works very well, and we do have confidence in the list if it is a brand new one.

If we have the nomination 28 days prior to the election, it enables the law to be changed so that early voting can take place three weeks before the election, where formerly it was only two weeks. That is a good idea. The early voting aspect could have been improved by allowing the deputy returning officers to take care of early votes. As it is now, a person who wishes to vote early must go to the office of the returning officer. That is awkward for many people who live some distance from where the returning officer is located. Indeed, in my own area, I can see where a person may have to travel 30 or 40 miles. The situation could be simplified by saying that the deputy returning officer, looking after the poll in that area, could also look after the early voting. I do believe that the present system is a little too cumbersome.

The same situation applies to advance polls. Under the provisions of the act an advance poll has to be set up for each polling division. Within seven days after the writs are issued the parties can ask for others and that can be done. It means that the number of advance polls is set before the candidate is nominated. There should be a discretion that the returning officer could provide more advance polls and locate them wherever the candidates ask for them. In other words, there should be no difficulty for people going to the advance poll. With regard to my own area, I know that there was one advance poll where we should have had three. We did not get into it soon enough, and had we asked for three I feel sure we would have had them. The returning officer should have more discretion in that regard.

The committee in the other place studied the bill thoroughly. If I recall correctly, the committee held five sittings, but stuck with the bill. I was rather surprised that some additions to the bill were not advocated. The addition that I would like to see concerns simplification of proxy voting. The present method is too complicated. A person can act as proxy only once and it has to be in the same polling division. I see no reason why a person could not act for a number of voters. Perhaps an agent of the candidate could act as proxy for voting. It appears that the draftsman has a suspicion that people will try to take advantage and do things that are not normally done. After all, these days elections are pretty well open and shut. We have always followed the principle: "Get out as many voters as you can, and then we will trust they will do the right thing." There does appear to be a suspicion that we must guard against anything that might happen. I believe that to be totally wrong. Let us suppose that a person is ill. In order to get a proxy voter, he would have to get a letter from the doctor, and it has to be on the doctor's own letterhead. At the last election some of us got doctors to write proxies on their prescription pads, and the returning officer accepted them, but technically it was not correct.

**Senator Perrault:** So that is how you did it!

[Senator Macdonald.]

**Senator Macdonald:** But we didn't win. University students have to get something from their registrar, or their parents have to go to the returning officer. I cannot understand why students who attend universities outside of Canada cannot vote by proxy. If they were attending university in Canada they would be able to. I fail to understand that situation. I also advocate travelling or mobile polling stations, which could go from hospital to hospital or from senior citizens' home to senior citizens' home, where people could vote without too much difficulty.

Having said that, I support the bill. I cannot see any need to send it to committee for further examination. After all, it has been examined by those who are most interested in elections.

**Senator Perrault:** Honourable senators—

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, if the Honourable Senator Perrault speaks now, his speech will have the effect of closing the debate.

**Senator Perrault:** Honourable senators, I rise to thank those honourable senators who have participated in this debate: Senator Murray, with his experienced insight into the election process; Senator Godfrey, with his superb qualifications, as someone who knows a great deal about the election—

**Senator Flynn:** Financing.

**Senator Perrault:**—process and how successful elections are organized; and certainly Senator Macdonald, who draws upon his vast experience in the maritimes to inspire his constructive ideas for further reforms.

The ideas advanced by these honourable senators are interesting and worthy of further study. While there is some disagreement in this chamber as to the value of a permanent voters' list, in some jurisdictions it is thought to be a great advance. Senator Murray said that he marvelled at how the present system works. We on this side marvel at times—

**An Hon. Senator:** We like the results.

**Senator Perrault:** Most of the time we like the results, but not always.

**Senator Frith:** More in the east than in the west.

**Senator Perrault:** Yes, I had that in mind.

With regard to the process of educating scrutineers, one often observes the apparent chaos involved in that process, and one wonders how it is possible to produce any list at all; but, by and large, the electoral list is well prepared and well done—in fact, assembled most competently and efficiently—by the Chief Electoral Officer and his people.

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** I believe you meant to say "enumerators".

**Senator Perrault:** Yes, enumerators. Did I say "scrutineers"? However, all parties need excellent scrutineers as well in the constituencies. It is obvious that beyond the amendments before us, further changes will be required in the Canada Elections Act. The bill before us represents only some