

*Canada Elections Act*

our system of measurement is an extremely large fish.

**Mr. Pringle:** That is between the eyes!

**Mr. St. Pierre:** Yes, between the eyes. Unfortunately I did not weigh it. My wife had a camera and took a black and white picture of it, and the negative alone weighed seven pounds! I was mentioning this to Jim Chambers, the head of the fishermen's union at Powell River, and he said, "What was the size of the fish, Paul? I said, "I would estimate it at about 160 pounds—dressed, that is." Well, Jim said he had a big catch himself. He had been fishing just off Desolation Sound, near Refuge Cove, which was first mapped by Captain George Vancouver of the ship *Discovery* in 1792. Jim was fishing very deep and snagged something on the bottom. When he brought it up he found he had snagged the binnacle lamp from Captain George Vancouver's ship *Discovery*. You can imagine his surprise, Mr. Speaker, when he found the candle in it was still burning.

• (5:10 p.m.)

Now, Jim Chambers and I are reasonable. Reasonable men. We compromised. I took 100 pounds off the fish and Jim put out the candle. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, compromise is very necessary. We may have to compromise in order to reform our electoral system by 1972. If we cannot implement the recommendations of the entire Castonguay report, at least let us deal with absentee ballots.

Paragraph (b) of the motion in my name says:

—to provide that armed services ballots shall henceforth be called absentee ballots and be counted simultaneously with other absentee ballots without, however, altering the present method of balloting by the armed services;

Our servicemen who serve in many parts of the world vote under an intricate system which, to the best of my knowledge, in most ways seems to satisfy them. What does not satisfy them, and on this I am inclined to agree with them, is that at present servicemen as members of a professional group are singled out and the way they vote is made public. We are told how many service votes each party gained. We are not told, however, how the doctors or other professional groups in the country voted, and to this extent servicemen have been discriminated against.

Acceptance of my motion would mean that servicemen's votes would be collected as at

[Mr. St. Pierre.]

present. Their ballots would be treated as other absentee ballots are treated and, instead of coming to a central office here in Ottawa to be counted, with the results of the vote being transmitted to the various polling divisions, would go directly to the chief returning officer of each electoral district in Canada, where the ballots would be mixed with other absentee ballots and counted. It is as simple as that.

Paragraph (c) of the motion seeks to extend to the members of the Public Service of Canada and others serving abroad the polling privileges extended to our armed services. Of course, there is a limit to the number of Canadians living abroad who can participate in an election. After all, 15,000 Canadians live in London alone and we could not reasonably expect to service these people. Many Canadians live in other foreign cities. The members of our diplomatic service, however, are in a different position since we send them abroad as our servants. I think that their votes ought to be collected as we would collect the votes from the armed services, with identical or very similar machinery being used.

It is extremely important to make sure that the votes of our diplomatic representatives are not broken down, as are our armed services votes, in order to reveal party support. No one should know that our overseas personnel voted largely for this party or that party. Our absentee ballots should be entitled to the anonymity that attaches to the votes of all our citizens.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, may I say that I hope the provisions of our electoral act will be revised by 1972 or earlier, if there should be an election earlier, so that those voting through absentee ballots will not be faced with a situation in many areas which is shocking and quite undemocratic. I thank hon. members for their courteous attention.

**Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member who has just spoken for his excellent presentation and his excellent fishing story. In one sense we are all fishermen, since we have all gone fishing for something that is important to us in order that we may sit in this house. Our methods have perhaps been similar to the methods that have been described in some fishing stories we have heard.

The hon. member's notice of motion is welcome and I will not speak at great length on it. I merely wish to bring up one or two