

Canada Elections Act

Mr. Speaker: It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

last amended in this House, I believe, on October 25, 1983, through Bill C-169.

● (1740)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the House to proceed to Item No. 13?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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CANADA ELECTIONS ACT (NON-LISTED ELECTORS)

MEASURE TO AMEND

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway) moved that Bill C-236, an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (non listed electors) be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak on Bill C-236. It is my private Members' Bill which had first reading on April 25, 1985, and is to amend the Canada Elections Act. I want to thank the Government because I understand it is prepared to refer the Bill to the committee in principle allowing the points to be discussed in committee. I am most appreciative for this action. That is the way Parliament should work.

Briefly let me tell you what the Bill does, Mr. Speaker. It is fairly simple. There are three provisions in it. The first clause reads:

This amendment allows urban voters to be "sworn in" and vote on election day where their names fail to appear on the voters list for the urban polling division. This procedure is currently open only to rural voters.

I will come back to rural voters and explain it in a moment. The second clause reads:

This provision attempts to remedy the situation where candidates and their canvassers have been denied entry to apartment buildings, hotels and the like which have "no soliciting" policies.

I will come back to explain that. The third clause reads:

This provision would allow travellers and students temporarily resident outside Canada to vote in general elections in a manner similar to Canadian Forces and Public Service electors posted outside Canada.

Why did I bring this Bill forward now so early in the session? Because the subject is still fresh in most all Members' minds. It was only last summer around about this time that the previous Prime Minister called upon the Governor General to dissolve the House to have a federal election which took place in September. As a result, most Members of the House are quite familiar with the Canada Elections Act. The Act was

Members of this Parliament are aware of what it is like to go through an election. They will know the strengths and weaknesses of the Act. Generally it is pretty strong. We are fortunate to have a vibrant democracy in Canada. I wish my Party had won more seats, but I am particularly happy that I was returned and my colleagues, such as the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) who is sitting beside me were returned.

I took the occasion to write to Members of the House to give them some notice of my Bill and I am pleased to say that I received a response from numerous Members who were prepared to support the Bill or who had some comments and took up my request. I will just mention that the Hon. Member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) responded, a Liberal MP. The Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Dorin) responded, a Conservative. The Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) already a very active Member of this House who has been here only a short time, a Conservative, responded. The Hon. Member for Moncton (Mr. Cochrane) responded. All Members responded very favourably to referring the Bill to committee.

Some other Members responded who had some concerns with the Bill and, to be fair, I should mention them. A Member from my own Party, the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap) had some concern about the provision with respect to urban electors voting at the polls when they were not registered. We will discuss that point in committee. The Hon. Member for Etobicoke North (Mr. Pennock) also expressed some concern about that part of the Bill.

Let me just go through some of the provisions of the Bill that are relevant to the matter this afternoon. The first provision of the Bill arose from a letter I received from one of my constituents and concerns that I received at the time of the election. Essentially last year's election was a summer election. A lot of people were out of the country who wanted to vote but could not because they were going to be out of the country. Elections usually come every four years. We should err on the side of trying to make it possible for as many people to vote. We should try to figure out procedures that would allow people to vote. I would like to read a letter from E. Carol MacPherson who lives at 2981 E. Twenty-Sixth Avenue, Vancouver, in my riding. The letter is dated July 30, 1984. She writes:

Dear Mr. Waddell:

Like many other people, I imagine. I am having difficulty arranging to vote in this upcoming election. I will be out of the country between August 11 and September 8. The Returning Officer has told me that I will not be able to vote and no possible arrangements can be made. Surely something can be done for those of us trying to be responsible citizens. I am offended by the attitude of the Returning Office that I am somehow remiss to take my hard-earned holidays when an election has been called.

I am writing to your office not only because you are my MP but also because I support your candidacy. I appreciate the work you have done for your constituency and I would really like to vote in this election.