

*Canada Elections Act*

Bill C-79 to extend the revision period until the 12th day, including a specific clause that provides for the registration of a voter. That is in Bill C-79. Now, with this Bill, we could . . . and I am all for it, not that I am against what the Hon. Member is offering us, but the Government goes so far as saying that until three days before, that is until the Friday before the vote, it will be possible to go to the office of the returning officer in order to add to the electoral list the name of the people who might have been left out during the revision and who might come up at the last minute.

So I think the Hon. Member, who is a reasonable gentleman, will be interested to discuss it further when we deal with Bill C-79, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other acts in relation thereto.

To this day, I am satisfied that there is at least a disposition to act. I wanted to put forward an amendment myself but there we have a proposal by the Government to extend the period until Friday. That is a considerable improvement, especially for people who live in urban areas. Because my colleagues and I, during the electoral campaign, we keep finding people who are not on the list and it is very frustrating not to be able to have them added. At least, we know that we will be able to have them added to the list up until the Friday before the election. So whether it is the Friday before or the very same day, I believe there is not much difference between what the Hon. Member is proposing, what we have been requesting for a long time and what should be done. There will be a possibility when the day comes to combine all the various proposals.

The second proposal of the Hon. Member would also be a source of difficulty as some building owners forbid any entry because the tenants are senior citizens, people who are afraid of seeing so many visitors circulate in their building, as the previous speaker pointed out. There also, I am rather inclined to agree with my colleague. However, I would like us to be able to examine all implications very carefully.

We all know what it means and how difficult it is to visit certain large apartment buildings in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. There could be twelve candidates coming once, twice or three times. This could mean up to thirty-six visits by people, either by themselves or with others, to campaign in a building. There are problems, but it is always possible to find solutions. For my part, I am an optimist. We can look at all that later on when we examine the legislation which the Government should bring back very soon. The Hon. Member is certainly better informed than I am about that as he is the House Leader of his party. I imagine, however, that Bill C-79 will be referred to a committee in the near future. If this Bill does not pass today, I hope that he will be in the House then to go over all his proposals.

Therefore, there are no major objections except for the fact that this will create difficulties. We shall have to look at a way to appease the fears that many people may have in seeing all kinds of visitors in their buildings, especially in the major

centres, where people have a greater tendency to be scared. I do not blame them. It is a major problem in the downtown areas where there are big buildings in which no strangers are admitted. But how can we defend democracy if we cannot talk to people? It would be appropriate to have a lengthy debate on this issue.

The third proposal of the Hon. Member, the last one, after which I shall sit down and let others speak as provided by our rules, aims at allowing travellers and students who are temporarily residing abroad to vote in a general election, just like the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and public servants posted are allowed to do.

However, I foresee problems in this regard also. For twenty years, we have been looking at ways to make it possible for the greatest number of Canadians to vote. How can we do that? Members of the Armed Forces are registered annually, and so are public servants on foreign postings, but it would be difficult to do the same for students and travellers.

I am certain that our discussions will be lengthy when the Government Bill is being considered. In fact, the Bill includes a whole section on the right to vote of others than the military and public servants. This raises enormous difficulties. The Hon. Member is aware of that. Where will we stop? Students in Canada, that's understandable. Students abroad, that's also understandable, but is their status permanent? We always have much sympathy for students. As for Canadian citizens travelling abroad, we do not know. Once you open the door in the case of travellers, the next time you probably would want to open it for . . . As a matter of fact, a provision in the Government's Bill makes it possible to extend the right to vote to people temporarily residing outside Canada without losing their citizenship. But as you know, their situation is similar to that of people coming to Ottawa to work for a while. If you keep talking long enough about the people who are in Ottawa on a temporary basis, you suddenly realize that they are here on a permanent basis. This will create difficulties.

I know that in the Bill introduced by the Government, it is difficult to decide when to say yes or no? Personally, I have no final opinion on this for reasons which I will explain when we deal with this Bill. I prefer not to indicate my final opinion, because I intend to be very actively involved when the House considers Bill C-79. The reason I wanted to speak to this Bill was to show the difficulty we will have to face, but there is no doubt that it will be possible to follow through with our colleague's number one proposal.

As far as the second proposal is concerned, we will have to decide how we can assure the safety of people living in a building while carrying out our duties during an election campaign in a democratic society. I share the concern of my Hon. friend on this.

As to the third proposal, we will consider it more thoroughly soon, because it represents something which I feel is new, complex, but we want to extend the right to vote to the