

The WITNESS: I see no objection to the method suggested by Mr. Cannon.

Mr. WARD: Leaving it open?

The WITNESS: Leaving it open.

Hon. Mr. HARRIS: Is there not a section relating to the powers of the Governor in Council which says that it shall not delay the taking of a vote any longer than is reasonable and necessary?

Mr. PEARKES: I agree with that, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Mr. HARRIS: I agree that the authority vests in the Governor in Council but I feel that he would not be the proper one to have this function. It is possible that such a power might be exercised in such a way that public opinion would not support it if you left it open and one of these disasters should occur. It might be that action in issuing the writ might be delayed longer than public opinion thought it should be and there could actually arise a demand that a writ be issued and if we held it up, if the Governor in Council deferred making his decision to issue the writ in the light of all the circumstances, there might be real dissatisfaction that he had not done it earlier, and I think if you had a provision in there he would have to take it anyway and in the meantime the public would be more convinced that he was going to take that action then would be the case if there were no limit.

Mr. PEARKES: The Governor in Council has to make the decision to delay or to withdraw the writ in the first place, and if he does that surely it is not going too far to say that you would expect the Governor in Council to see when he withdrew the writ, having consideration to the circumstances involved that he would not withhold the election too long.

The WITNESS: The procedure suggested in this amendment is not new. There is a similar procedure in the case of a by-election. When a vacancy occurs in the House of Commons the Speaker issues a warrant to me, and from the day I receive the warrant in my office, a writ must issue within a period of six months. It is the prerogative of the Governor in Council to issue a writ for the holding of the by-election, but the writ must issue within that period of six months from the date I receive a warrant from the speaker of the House of Commons. So, this is not establishing a new procedure, it is more or less "cribbing" from the House of Commons Act.

Mr. PEARKES: Why not make it six months then—the same time?

The CHAIRMAN: Then I think we should say "a new writ ordering a by-election" instead of saying "a new writ ordering an election".

The WITNESS: "An election" is, I believe, the proper term.

Mr. APPLEWHAITE: You cover that in the last two lines.

Some Hon. MEMBERS: Question?

Mr. ARGUE: I wonder whether the minister might be able to say whether the government is anxious to have that type of authority—or whether it depends only on what the committee decides.

Hon. Mr. HARRIS: This?

Mr. ARGUE: Yes, the whole thing.

Hon. Mr. HARRIS: This amendment arose as a result of a discussion in the committee last year and it is not unusual for the government to adopt reasonably sound suggestions. This, I thought was one of them. We have got along without it but there is the possibility, having in mind the factors that were mentioned last year, and the government feels if the committee would like to have this amendment there is no reason why they should not have it.

The CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of six months, raise their hands.

Carried.