

*The Address—Mr. Burton*

speech, which I thought made a great deal of sense.

• (8:10 p.m.)

My election in the newly formed constituency of Regina East came after a hard fought campaign in which real issues were discussed—at least, they were discussed in the local campaign. My campaign was based largely on the New Democratic party policies with respect to medicare, Saskatchewan style; adequate housing; reasonable interest rates; the cost of living and the need for a prices review board; and a sound agricultural program. These are the things for which I intend to fight. Some of my colleagues have already discussed some of these subjects and I support their stand.

While I am still close to the subject of elections, I should like to urge the government to reconsider its position, as stated by the government house leader the other day, and suggest that consideration be given to updating and improving the elections act at the earliest possible opportunity. Changes are required in the elections act and in order to produce the best possible changes, time will be required. Members now have before them the report of the representation commissioner in respect of a permanent voter's list and absentee voting. Members should be given the opportunity of studying in committee the recommendations of the commissioner, with the hope that such scrutiny will bring forward a plan that can form the basis for an improved act.

From my own experience in a number of campaigns, I feel that the elections act as it presently stands has not kept pace with the needs of the times and with the changing society in which we live. There are a considerable number of small and technical improvements that might be considered. I should like to draw to the attention of members three major areas in which I feel improvements are essential. First, there is the need for improved enumeration of voters. The present system is simply not good enough. Thousands of people have their names left off the list because of the present outdated enumeration machinery. In urban areas the usual result is that people left off the preliminary list are disenfranchised on election day. Second, there is the need to provide each voter with the greatest possible opportunity of exercising his franchise on or near election day. We live in a highly mobile

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society and the present election machinery simply has not been able to keep in step with the situations confronting people at election time. I have come in contact with many cases in which people have been disenfranchised through circumstances completely beyond their control.

Third, there is the need for greater uniformity between federal and provincial election acts. A great deal of confusion is caused by differences between the provincial and federal election acts in Saskatchewan and, I am sure, all across Canada. While it will not be possible to achieve complete uniformity, I think steps could be taken to avoid some of the needless confusion which occurs at present as a result of mechanical differences in the operation of provincial and federal election acts, as well as differences in poll boundaries.

Regina East is now a constituency of over 90,000 people. It comprises all of the city of Regina east of Albert street, extends east of Regina for some 50 miles to the vicinity of Fort Qu'Appelle and north for well over 100 miles to the vicinity of Wynyard and the Quill Lakes. Over 70 per cent of the people in the riding live in the city of Regina.

Regina, for a considerable number of years, has been one of the fastest growing cities of Canada. It now has a population of near 140,000 and it is certainly destined to continue as one of the major cities of Canada. Its distinctive characteristics and history make it one of Canada's great cities. A great deal of the rural area of the constituency is a mixed farming region. While there are some areas where the growing of wheat predominates, through much of the constituency mixed farming involving joint grain and livestock operations prevails. Near the city of Regina there, of course, is considerable concentration on dairy production. The historic Qu'Appelle river valley also runs through the rural area of the constituency and provides a considerable potential for irrigation, recreation and other development.

The east half of the city of Regina, which is in my constituency, is populated by people with a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. People from almost every European ethnic group, as well as some people with an Asian ethnic background, are living in this part of Regina. Many of these groups have made a significant and distinct contribution to the cultural and social life of Regina. Many people have moved into Regina from the surrounding rural areas. Similarly, the people in