

Government Orders

sentence and who are still in prison at the time of voting. The second category will be those Canadians who are living abroad, have lived abroad continuously for five years or longer, or have no intention of returning. Those are the only two excluded categories.

That is a grand simplification. It opens the door to an unknown number of new voters. There have been estimates of between one million and two million more votes being cast in the next federal general election because of the sum total of these changes. They go back to enumeration, getting one's name on the list, being able to swear in on election day, living abroad, being in another part of Canada, and proxy voting being replaced by voting in one's own home for those who are physically handicapped. All those measures taken together produce some unknown quantity of voters. Our predictions would be that the next federal election would produce more voters than at any previous time in Canadian history and that the difference would be substantial. Our democracy will work a bit better because of that.

I want to deal with the future work of the committee and to implore the House on a couple of issues. Bill C-114 needs quick passage. We intend to move it quickly to committee to commence clause-by-clause consideration, to go through it and to be able to make amendments members propose to make the law better. It must be in place as quickly as possible or the Chief Electoral Officer will not have the administrative time necessary to put the new systems in place.

I ask the House to bring forward whatever solid ideas it has for positive change, but let us not unduly delay the passage of Bill C-114 because the nation will benefit from it and the nation needs it.

Some people are worried about a lot of items that are not in Bill C-114. Committee members have absolutely no difficulty in understanding those worries which belong for the most part in what we refer to as phase two or phase three. The committee began over two weeks ago considering a draft report on phase two. Phase two will deal with all the communication issues, all the expenditure issues, and all the enforcement issues.

If we can report to the House on those issues by the end of March, if we can see legislation by the first part of

May and pass it into law by the end of May, all those phase two issues can be in place in law and implemented well before the next federal general election.

Mr. Milliken: It should be this May.

Mr. Hawkes: It should be this May.

Mr. Milliken: The election should be this May.

Mr. Hawkes: "The election should be this May". It is unlikely. I would predict the election will probably commence some time this summer with voting in late summer or early fall.

For those members and people in the community worried about the communication issues, worried about the expenditure limits, rebates and definition of election expenses, and worried about enforcement issues, the committee's work is well advanced. I see no difficulty in the committee reporting before the end of March. That leaves sufficient time for the House to act and for us to have changes in place in plenty of time before the next federal general election.

• (1925)

The third part of our work, phase three, will deal with a number of issues such as redistribution, nomination meetings, registration of local associations, aboriginal constituencies, leadership contests and a number of other items in the Lortie commission report, none of which can come into force before the next election because we are too close to an election for them to be put in place and for them to be acted upon.

In terms of our timetable in phase three, if the committee can report by the end of April, if we have the month of May for the presentation of a piece of cabinet legislation and pass it in June, the entire *remaniement*, the entire change to the Canada Elections Act, the entire overhaul, can be accomplished by this Parliament in a truly positive fashion.

After one year of hard work by the committee we have eight members of Parliament whose expertise in these matters grows almost daily and whose efficiency and relationship to these matters get a bit better.

There are a few other changes in this legislation I would like to touch on briefly, to spend perhaps two minutes on. There are some items in here which will