

*Supply*

ballot boxes from Newfoundland, the Atlantic and Quebec closed and only start to count the votes when the polls close out west. However, that suggestion has been pointed out to me as being quite impractical. We have volunteers, scrutineers, poll captains and all the paraphernalia and staffing of a polling station. Those people would be sitting for some four and a half hours before the counting could start. I know if I were in Newfoundland or somewhere else in Atlantic Canada I would not be sipping tea or coffee while waiting for four or four and a half hours. It would be pretty difficult to keep the crew of volunteers together. That suggestion really has a down side and does not make too much sense.

**An hon. Member:** It would be one big party.

**Mr. Huntington:** It would be one big party and there would be a lot of recounts in the days following.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Be careful. Could I ask a question Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Will the hon. member for Capilano accept a question from the hon. member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme)?

**Mr. Huntington:** Mr. Speaker, if it will give me some peace and quiet, yes.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the hon. member very kindly to be very careful because more and more we have to be careful of what we say in the House. I do not know what he implies by these difficulties that may take place in the east, that there may be a lot of recounts. What does the hon. member imply by that, that an easterner would do what?

**Mr. Huntington:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. member move out of his province and into the Atlantic provinces to learn some of the folklore, the life and the way things happen. Perhaps after that he could come out west to see what happens when a group of hard-working volunteers with common objectives get together with four and a half hours to kill.

The opening of the ballot boxes at a uniform time across the country is impractical. Perhaps we can solve the problem by having the same voting hours in each of the different time zones. I think it would be fair and equitable if we had a 14-hour period after the polls are closed before the ballot boxes of the country are opened.

We stay up all night watching the returns trickle in. But you can go to bed and wake up in the morning and still not have the complete results. Therefore, if we had, say, a space of 14 hours in each of the time zones following the closing of the boxes before the scrutineers and the returning officers assemble in each of the ridings to count the ballots, perhaps we can deliver the equity and fairness that we in the west certainly want because of the handicap of time zones across the country. That is one suggestion we might look at.

Personally I think we will be in serious trouble if we accept the time schedule which the hon. member for Vancouver

Quadra put forward in his private member's bill, which the government has now picked up and put in Bill C-113. However, I would also remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra was speaking in a far broader context. He wanted the polls opened fewer hours, but he also wanted to widen the franchise to ensure that no one is prevented from voting by reason of change of residence. He wanted to make it easier for proxy votes. He did not want this only for students, fishermen, mariners and air crews. He wanted to eliminate the need for registrar's certificates for students and eliminate the need for medical certificates for the sick. Those other things were what he suggested in his private member's bill in the preparation of which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) lent his efforts. He opened up the whole issue for discussion. As everyone in this House knows, private members' bills do not come out of caucus committees, caucus sessions and debate.

Let us see what would happen if you were to go ahead with the closing of the polls at 5.30. In my riding of Capilano we have a very narrow bridge which was built in 1933-1934. Quite often there is an accident on that bridge which jams up the flow of traffic. Sometimes you can be in those traffic jams for an hour and a half to three hours. What do you think would happen in a situation like that? I do not think you could risk closing the polls at 5.30, because people may be unable to vote.

What about the people who work in downtown Vancouver? They have to travel the artery to Highway 1 to the Fraser Valley. If an accident occurs on that highway, there is a traffic jam. The risks of a 5.30 closing in British Columbia and on the lower mainland are extremely serious in that it might prevent people from exercising their franchise. There would also be a rush because 74 per cent of the people vote between six and eight o'clock in the afternoon on polling day. There would still be a tendency to allow that. If people rushed to the doors of the polling stations at 5.30 o'clock, what is the returning officer or the poll captain to do? Should they shut the doors, leaving an angry mob outside? Should they allow them to come in and have confusion in the polling stations? There are very, very serious hazards in any change in the system which would move closing time from eight o'clock to 5.30 in British Columbia. It is very unfair. It will increase regional alienation in Canada rather than decrease it. We must look at a positive time after the polls close but before the counting starts in order to give the country the equity it needs.

● (2130)

I have another misapprehension. Members of the NDP seem to want to put more regulations, controls, fines and penalties on the media. The problem is not the media in eastern Canada leaking the count as it moves west. Anyone in western Canada can pick up the telephone and call a friend in Ontario, Quebec or Nova Scotia; the results are available to anyone who is interested in the political process. If we start to regulate the media—television, radio and the press—that regulation will have to spill over into the United States because the United