

I read it, the bill gives him 12 days to begin enumeration and 6 days to complete it.

Honourable senators, I must say that the enumeration process in this country is a wonder to behold. As I understand it, the parties that finish first and second in the immediately preceding election are responsible for providing lists of enumerators to the returning officer. In the hectic days that follow the issuance of a writ, these enumerators must be recruited, trained, supplied with enumeration materials and put on the roll. The process becomes more difficult with each succeeding federal election. Jobs as enumerators are not much sought after, at least in some parts of the country. The political parties that are busy setting up their headquarters, organizing their canvasses, raising money, holding conventions and getting their campaigns under way are not always terribly anxious to deploy their most active and effective workers to the task of enumeration. Therefore, the process and the result is quite imperfect.

The point I make by those remarks is that the idea of a permanent voters' list in this country is surely an idea whose time has come. I am told that it would cost \$30 million a year to have such a list, but I am sure that we can find places, such as the government advertising budget, where we can save \$30 million which would be better applied to the setting up and the maintenance of a permanent voters' list in the country.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): We would have to advertise the list then.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): It would cost much less.

Hon. Jean-Paul Deschatelets: Such a list exists in Quebec.

Senator Murray: Senator Deschatelets reminds the Senate that such a list does exist in Quebec.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): And they still find the money to advertise.

Senator Murray: They still find the money to do some advertising, but proportionately—

Senator Flynn: Look at the provincial budget we had last evening.

Senator Murray: In any case, the permanent voters' list in Quebec did not come under Mr. Pariseau's axe last night and was, and is, a very useful initiative in that province.

I would be the first to agree that Parliament should not rush into making changes in the elections law. There must be very careful consideration and the widest possible consensus among the political parties before amendments to the elections law are put before Parliament. It is obvious that Bill C-58 does enjoy such a consensus.

Having said that, I would make a plea to the government, and to others responsible, to get on with the consideration of a number of other important amendments, some of which were recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer following the general elections of 1974, 1979 and 1980, but which still have not been dealt with. For example, a decision will have to be

made soon whether the spending limits on parties and candidates ought to be raised to take account of inflation. At the same time, Parliament will, I believe, want to reconsider the formula for the reimbursement of candidates. As I understand it, that formula is based on the cost of a mailing to constituents using first class postage which was at eight cents. With a 30-cent first class rate the reimbursement to candidates could, in some cases, equal 100 per cent of the candidate's allowable expenses. I think that is a matter that Parliament will want to consider, and consider relatively soon.

● (1600)

Another matter—and this is a horse that I have flogged once or twice in committees of the Senate and elsewhere—concerns the reimbursement to national parties which is made on the basis of their expenditures on advertising in the electronic media of radio and television. That, of course, creates a strong incentive—the incentive of a 50-cent dollar—to parties to put their advertising dollars into radio and television. However, I, for one, would like to see a formula introduced which would make newspaper advertising eligible for the same subsidy, whatever it may be, that is granted to the parties in respect of radio and television advertising.

I remind the Senate, and the government in particular, that several months ago the Trudeau administration entered the third year of its present mandate. In the normal course of events we should have a general election within two years. I believe it is important that the matters I have mentioned, and a number of other matters contained in the Chief Electoral Officer's reports, be attended to before the next election. As I understand it, the Chief Electoral Officer has convened an *ad hoc* committee of representatives of the various parties, which has been working on some of these amendments, and it is up to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections in the other place to begin taking these recommendations into consideration, and recommending them to the government and to Parliament by way of amendments to the act.

Finally, there is the matter of redistribution, on which the Honourable the Leader of the Government and I have had several exchanges in recent weeks. Under the present schedule, as it is envisaged by the government, the new electoral boundaries, as set up pursuant to the 1981 census, would probably not be in effect before October 1984, which might well be too late for the next general election. It may very well be 1988 before an election is fought on the basis of the 1981 census. I say that that is too slow. I say it is unfair to members of Parliament and to their constituents, especially in ridings that have had very significant increases in population over the past 10 years or more. The process can be speeded up, and, in fact, I am delighted to say that part of it has already been speeded up somewhat.

A few days ago, on May 20, to be exact, the government passed an order in council setting up the redistribution commissions in the various provinces and territories. I obtained a copy of the order in council today.

Senator Frith: Legally?