



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## UKRAINE

### Parliamentary Elections Observations

Statement by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

## THE SENATE

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### UKRAINE

#### PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OBSERVATIONS

**Hon. Larry W. Campbell:** Honourable senators, originally I tried to slip this little speech in while tabling a report and got caught. For that I apologize to all honourable senators.

This has to do with the Ukrainian election and I just wanted to tell honourable senators what I wrote the night after the election.

I set out with Leif Petterson, an M.P. from Sweden; an interpreter and a driver for a rural area of the Ukraine. We left at six in the morning and drove for an hour and a half. Urban quickly turned into rural within 20 kilometres of Kiev. From that time until 8 p.m., we travelled from one small polling booth to another. The largest of our stations had 1,800 voters and the smallest, 250.

There are few young people left in the rural area. Because there is no work, they migrate to the cities. This is true farmland — flat, good soil, but mostly fallow. There is no equipment and no one is working the fields. Therefore, people subsist mainly on small market gardens.

The vast majority of people we met during the day would have been over 65 years old, with many of them looking over 80. They rode bicycles or old motorcycles, walked with canes and came in trucks to vote. There is something incredibly moving about a 90-year-old woman, who walked with one cane and a stick, working her way down the road to the polling station.

No one was starving, but, judging from their clothes, not much had moved since the 1970s. I learned that the Ukraine has only been free of foreign domination for about 20 years. This was after being ruled by successive invaders for centuries. Every village, no matter how small, had memorials to those who fought and died in these wars. It was sobering to see a village that only had 200-plus voters with a memorial listing easily over 200 dead.

We saw no real problems in the polling stations. They were well managed, with cameras on the voting booths and the voting tables. The halls themselves ranged from a school built 115 years ago to an unused disco hall complete with a glittering globe on the ceiling.

I have stories both funny and poignant. Suffice it to say, I was extremely grateful to be Canadian and to have the quite incredible life that I have had. The strength and dignity of the Ukrainian people were a great inspiration to me.

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