

*Canada Elections Act*

devise proper voting regulations so that all those who should have the right to vote will be given that privilege.

The first question that comes to mind when one talks about lowering the voting age is the question of responsibility. Let me quote briefly from the report of the Ontario legislature's select committee on youth. At page 294 we find the following:

Young people at age 18 to 20 today are generally more educated and more knowledgeable than any previous generation at the same age. One of the great weaknesses noted by the committee in its many contacts with young people was the inability of adults to give youngsters responsibility commensurate with their knowledge and capability. Probably this has stemmed from the unfortunate image that has been created by those few irresponsible, often immature teenagers who all too frequently come to public attention. Certainly they do not typify nor represent the large numbers of stable and good living young persons who make up our great body of youth.

Let me point out, that the series of articles which have been published in so-called respectable papers in Canada dealing with birth control and what not as applied to the Yorkville situation have been most unjust. The articles which appeared in the *Globe and Mail* give examples of the type of undesirable situation that comes to the public eye. If it is not undesirable, it certainly is sensationalism brought to public attention in an irresponsible manner. In any event this does a great injustice to the majority of young people, particularly because of the way in which these things are presented. This is only a very small group.

The question of voting comes down to a question of responsibility. One difficulty facing young people today is that they have few opportunities for training in responsibility. It was never my fate, but my father assures me that he had to haul the coal and water, and do chores around the house every day. In those days we did not have electric heating, water brought to our door and that sort of thing. It is very difficult to give children responsibility around apartments and in the type of housing we have today. There is nothing for them to do, and if the parents are going to instil a sense of responsibility in their children they have to wrack their brains to find responsible tasks for them.

The educational system in which we rear our youth today almost of necessity results in making them parasites living off society. We deny them any possibility of participation in community affairs by virtually putting them in a system which locks them out of the

mainstream of Canadian society. These children go to school, and go to school, and go to school, to the point where the student in this society feels that he will spend his life doing nothing but going to school. They are given little opportunity to produce or to contribute to the community.

It is no wonder then that we find communities such as Yorkville, made up of youngsters who are alienated from today's society. They feel there is no role for them to play in the greater part of Canadian society. This is not strange in our society because we virtually push them out and cut them off. We almost completely forget that some of these youngsters are sensitive and creative and cannot hack it under the present circumstances. These people will be forced into this alienated existence for several years, or perhaps for their lives. This problem has always existed, but today in our society we seem to encourage it, perhaps not willingly but in a backhand way. We do not pay enough attention to the problem.

• (5:10 p.m.)

In a democratic system I think that responsibility is the key to its survival. We can bring youth into the political system, into the mainstream of Canadian society, provided we are willing to give them a role to play. The easiest way to do that is to bring them into perhaps the most important function in a free society, that is the political function, and give them a role in the political process. They would then become participants in this process. I believe young people want to participate in this area, they want the chance to accept responsibility, and we can help them to become more involved in society by lowering the voting age from the present 21 to 18.

If we did this it would provide leadership for those provinces which have not taken any steps to lower the voting age. It should be pointed out, though, that to date the federal government has not been a leader but a follower; it has done nothing as yet in this regard. I hope this bill, and similar bills and resolutions appearing on the order paper will be sent to the standing committee on privileges and elections in order that the committee may have a full discussion of the implications of these measures.

I should point out that the select committee of the Ontario government recommended that the voting age be reduced to either 18 or 19. There was some debate whether 18 or 19 was the proper age. The important thing is that