

*Canada Elections Act*

first speaker, students at university age undergoing training should above all others have qualified and informed opinions; and we need the interest of these young people in parliament. We need, let me say, their advice. They are at the very age when they are thinking about the future of their country, and every effort should be made to make sure that they are enfranchised.

I would go further and suggest that we might take a look at enfranchising any student who has reached the stage of intellectual development at which he takes on himself advanced study courses and the added responsibilities entailed in running the country. We might well make some improvements to the whole electoral system whereby these students could bring a more direct influence to bear upon parliament itself, which perhaps could be done through direct representation. It would then be possible to campaign on the university campus itself, and these young people could take an active part in politics without actually going out on the hustings and taking part in an election campaign at a point perhaps 1,000 miles away from their university.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I think that this representation in the British parliament has always worked very well. I realize there has been considerable argument about the distribution of these university seats. It would perhaps be difficult to decide which university should have the representation in parliament. On the other hand, that might be a way where we could elect three, four, or even half a dozen university students to parliament. They have their own student councils. Their methods of choosing a candidate and of carrying on may not be quite similar to our own methods, but I am sure, bearing in mind their educational level, that they should certainly be consulted. I think that it is an interesting and exciting idea to bring young people into public life, as early in life as possible. We may be able to channel more of our young leaders into the public service, where they are so badly needed.

I think we should take a look, before any changes are made, at the system of pre-polling, so that students could vote, perhaps in blocs, in university towns, in that way securing direct representation. Fitness to vote should be based on qualifications to vote. If we allow students the right to change their voting place prior to polling day, we should

look at the danger that possibly hundreds, or thousands of those students possibly may be encouraged to change their voting place at the whim of the party in power or at the whim of any group in a position to exert pressure.

I am sure that that sort of thing was in the minds of the legislators when they said that your place of residence would have to be based as of the date of issuance of the writ, in order to prevent such unnatural fluctuations of political power which might be brought about by any change in the rules.

Therefore, what I am saying is that we would be hasty in passing any amendment like this without first giving it very careful consideration. I think it would be most unwise to pass a private member's bill in the house after consideration of it for somewhat less than one hour. By all means, we should make sure that every student in Canada has the right to his franchise. However, I think this matter should go before an appropriate committee. We should not rush into hasty legislation in this manner, because it might do more harm than good.

**Mr. Barry Mather (New Westminster):** Mr. Speaker, as we welcome the introduction of Bill C-100, and would like it to come to a vote, I shall be extremely brief in my remarks.

We think that this bill shows a move in the right direction. As the sponsor of the bill has said, it aims at the correction of an anomaly, and at the removal of an oversight existing in the electoral regulations.

In those regulations, through what is an outmoded technicality, we have been debarring a great many young Canadians from doing what we in this house and what their parents would like them to be doing, which is taking an intelligent interest in Canadian political affairs and casting their votes.

We think that this residential qualification regulation which debars students in certain elections from voting is a very artificial regulation, when one thinks of the very good reasons on the other side of the argument for encouraging young Canadians to cast their ballots. In brief, we think this bill is a step in the right direction.

Having said that, may I point out an even worse anomaly regarding voting in federal elections. If it is true, and it is, that many hundreds or perhaps thousands of university students are debarred from voting because of this technicality respecting residence, many