

Canada Elections Act

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Oh.

Mr. Gauthier:—subject to taxation.

I must say what I mean by the words "subject to taxation", because I just heard the Postmaster General says: "Oh." It would be sheer logic that anybody be entitled to vote as long as he is subject to taxation by our governments.

I have another point to make on consideration of this bill to lower the voting age to 18 years. If our youth are to be given responsibilities, let them be given logical ones. If one can vote at 18, enter the armed forces at 18, and be liable, to taxation at 18, one attains one's majority at 18.

Mr. Habel: This is a purely provincial matter.

Mr. Gauthier: I do not see why a young man should not reach his majority at 18, in all provinces.

The voting age is a provincial as well as federal matter. I do not know whether the question of minors is a matter for the provinces only, or whether it also falls under federal jurisdiction—I am not very well aware of the situation in other provinces—but if this has any influence on the question of minors, I think it is an interesting question which, of course, has nothing to do with the bill under consideration today.

Incidentally, I think that if you want to hire young people, you must lower to 18 the age when they can vote or attain their majority.

I regret that this bill was presented as a public bill, because we know what usually happens to a private members' public bills, that is a first class funeral due to the clock, but I hope—

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): You are participating therein.

Mr. Gauthier: No, because I want to be brief. I am only expressing my point of view, but usually every public bill receives the same treatment. That is provided for in the standing orders.

However, I wish that this bill had been introduced by an hon. minister so that it would be discussed and put into effect as soon as possible in view of the coming election.

Mr. L. P. Neveu (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, it is with much pleasure that I avail myself of the privilege bestowed upon me to address myself to the members of this assembly in

[Mr. Gauthier.]

order to deal with a matter of the utmost importance.

Indeed, in any democracy, the free expression of citizens, through the voting process, constitutes the cornerstone of our democratic system. By our thoughts, our words and our actions we express our grievances to those who are elected to administer the affairs of the country our legislators.

Mr. Speaker, Bill C-5 before us this afternoon, has to do with an important question: is it advisable to give the right to vote to our fellow-citizens, male and female, at the age of 18 years. Evidently, there are pros and cons to this issue which no doubt deserve due consideration.

I hope that my humble contribution will promote the surge of ideas in order that we may be enlightened to take the necessary measures for the benefit of the common good. With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I should like to state objectively my point of view concerning that very important question of enfranchising 18-year old youth.

I am one of those who feel that the sharing of responsibilities will prove more satisfactory in this modern world.

Needless to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that youth has always played a leading part in wartime, in difficult periods. There are unfortunately too many young people among the bravest on the battlefields, who have not been emancipated by being given full rights. As far as Canada is concerned their contribution proved to be of prime importance during the 1914-18 and 1939-45 world wars.

Every year, on remembrance day, we deem it our duty to lay wreaths on the graves of our young soldiers who died between the age of 18 and 21, as a tribute to their courage, their ability and their valour. We must consider objectively that if citizens shed their blood, they have the right to share in peacetime and in every circumstances, the sacred rights belonging to fully emancipated citizens.

In the industrial sector, and in war production, a great number of those young people, of both sexes, made a very important and very useful contribution.

In peacetime, our young people really join in the march towards the common good. Through education, they prepare themselves to play a constructive role to ensure our economic and social development. Several of them assume important responsibilities and even become heads of families. To a large extent, they contribute to the administration of the government by paying taxes; they also