

Canada Elections Act

should graduate. The others leave school, I presume, at the average school leaving age of 16½ or 17.

Is it too much to say that they need the four years between 17 and 21, or the five years between 16 and 21, to feel their way, get their feet on the ground, and gain that experience which comes only with being in business and through the effort they must put forth to make a living? Is it too much to say that they need that four or five years to prepare their minds and to gain the necessary experience and information to vote intelligently?

It seems to me that is the only way in which we can tackle this problem. As I said, there has been a great deal of confusion in educational circles in Ontario regarding this particular problem and the plight of the student who is in high school, who leaves high school and goes on to university.

I know that of the 13 who graduate with a senior matriculation there are only three in Ontario who go on to university. Of that three, one quits, one fails and the other graduates, so we have an average now of one out of 100 children who go to elementary school in Ontario, graduate from there, and then finally graduate from university, according to the figures of the Ontario Educational Association in a survey they conducted in November, 1953.

With this in mind, and bearing in mind the views of other qualified people such as Dr. Hilda Neatby who, in her book, "Too Little for the Mind" created quite a furore, I think the situation certainly requires a great deal more study than we are able to give it, or can give it in this debate in the house at the present time. I would submit that the time is not ripe, the matter has not been sufficiently adjudicated upon, or the criterion on which we are going to change the voting age has not been sufficiently established for us to vote intelligently to change the voting age from 21 to 18 at this particular time.

Mr. Angus MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, may I say that as I have listened to the various members who have taken part in this debate and who were opposing this bill, I find that that opposition is in accord with every extension of the franchise down through the ages.

Mr. Nowlan: How do you know?

Mr. MacInnis: I have read a little bit of history.

Mr. Nowlan: What do you mean?

Mr. MacInnis: I can tell my hon. friend that in this country for many years—

[Mr. Enfield.]

Mr. Nowlan: What a statement to make!

Mr. MacInnis: —we were definitely of the opinion that women were not persons and consequently were not entitled to vote. It was thought that women were really not to be trusted with the duty of voting to elect members of parliament who were to make the laws. I do not know, but probably my hon. friend still holds those ideas. However, he certainly would not advocate them now that women are important and have influence because they have the vote. To advocate anything of that kind would mean the disappearance of the advocate from any political scene.

From reading English history I remember the opposition to the universal franchise for persons 21 years of age and over when it was advocated in that country. I recall reading Lord Macaulay's speech in the House of Commons in opposition to the measure, wherein he told of the dreadful things that would happen to the British people if these uneducated workers were given the right to vote. However, they were given the right to vote and those dreadful things have not happened to the people of the United Kingdom. When women were given the right to vote in that country, they were not given the vote at the age of 21; they were given it at the age of 26. Although women are supposed to mature earlier than do men, they were not given the vote until they reached an age five years older than that at which men received the vote.

I think a good deal of nonsense is talked with regard to this matter of the age of discretion. In the *Journal* the other day, I saw a definition of "discretion". I am sorry that I forgot to bring it with me but I think it was to the effect that it is the age at which you find you cannot do the things you would like to do. It was something like that although it may not be just quite that. If it is not, it ought to be anyway.

I find that when a person becomes a member of the armed forces at the age of 18 or perhaps earlier, he is entitled to vote. If a person who becomes a member of the armed forces at the age of 18 is entitled to vote, what about the person who sets out to earn a livelihood for, say, his mother and the younger members of his family at the age of 18? I may say that there are many of them. Should not that boy or that girl be allowed to vote? Why all these fine distinctions? They have no validity at all. If the age of 21 has been set, as was said by the hon. member who preceded me, say for perhaps one thousand years, on what basis was it set? Who said that was the age where