

Canada Elections Act

Then, when he comes to the C.B.C. it is the same thing, even though he says the C.B.C. has a much greater expenditure on Canadian talent:

Apparently financial stringency produces the same result in the C.B.C. as with private broadcasters; the easiest place to cut is in the employment of creative talent. This is a question of priorities. We do not suggest that talent budgets be limitless; however we do suggest that this should be one of the last parts of the budget to be cut. It seems that this policy has not been followed by the C.B.C. during the last five years.

Mr. Speaker, I urge parliament, the minister and anyone else who may be concerned with broadcasting to consider my suggestion that there is no real excuse for the existence of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in particular, unless we make it possible for the corporation and the leaders of the corporation to use funds to advance Canadian talent, and there is no use setting up the commission unless it is given power to insist that there be a large proportion of Canadian talent in Canadian television broadcasting.

• (5:00 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tardif): Order. It being five o'clock, this house will now proceed to the consideration of private members business as listed on today's order paper, namely public bills and private bills.

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**MEASURE TO REDUCE VOTING AGE TO EIGHTEEN YEARS**

Mr. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River) moved the second reading of Bill No. C-12, to amend the Canada Elections Act (Age of Voters).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to reduce the voting age in federal elections from age 21 as at present to age 18. The present situation in Canada is rather mixed and there seems to be no consensus in various provinces as to what should be the proper age for voting. In the four provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba the voting age is 21. In the three provinces of Newfoundland, Alberta and British Columbia the voting age is 19, and in the three provinces of Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan, the voting age is 18.

I might point out that even though the official age for voting in federal elections is 21, there is an exception. Those who are in the armed forces may vote at age 18. There

[Mr. Lewis.]

seems to be no consensus at all in Canada about this voting age.

I suppose in discussing this issue one first has to make clear just what voting means, and its significance. Perhaps, primarily the granting of the vote is an admission into full citizenship. In a democratic society it requires the responsibility of voting or not voting, the responsibility of participating in elections or not participating. There is an active and passive responsibility, and it is up to the person concerned to participate as he sees fit.

Basically in a representative democratic society voters do not vote on each particular issue. Federal elections involve a variety of issues and the voters tend to elect a person either by means of political designation or, in particular rural areas, they may vote for an individual and trust in his judgment. In any case under a representative democratic system it seems to me that the judgment of the elector is called into being as he makes a decision regarding the representative he wishes to elect to office.

Why is the present age in federal elections 21? There does not seem to be any particular reason. Age 21 was the legal age, when one came of age, and it was probably easy for the legislatures at the time to designate this age as the age when one came into full citizenship. Twenty one was also the age when an individual had usually completed his education, was out working, probably married and presumably carrying his share of the burden in the community. In short, at age 21 a person was considered to be an adult member of the community, as compared to somebody such as an adolescent who was dependant upon the community. Like all these types of measures it was created perhaps out the conventional wisdom of its time, but times have changed and no longer is it correct.

For example, under the type of education which we have imposed upon our younger people today, they are not finished at age 21. I was age 26 when I was finally released from university. In point of fact, I am still paying fees to the University of Toronto to remain eligible for my degree. I am still a graduate student in the eyes of the University. Age 21 is no longer the age when one has completed the apprenticeship that he must complete before coming to full citizenship. It seems that we have to take a look at the new conditions under which we are living and