

Statute Law Amendment Act

I want to ask the Hon. Member is that the section on equality . . . and I want to get back to the minimum age: Can the Hon. Member explain why at 18, a person can now serve on a board of directors, become a Member of Parliament or even Prime Minister, at least theoretically, but cannot become a senator? Is the Hon. Member, in the course of her research across the country, going to consult people to find out why one needs two qualifications to become a member of the Senate? A person must be so many years old and also own property worth more than \$3,000, or something like that.

Does the Hon. Member intend to examine this problem for any length of time, since her Leader is getting ready to make appointments to the Senate? Today, there is a vacancy, unfortunately due to the death of Senator Beaubien. Does the Hon. Member intend to review this section of the Constitution which I think should be considered discriminatory, and I hope that in the course of her broad consultations across the country, the Hon. Member, and I wish her bon voyage, in fact, Mr. Speaker, this Government's solution to dealing with so many Members is to make them travel . . . My question is: Does the Hon. Member intend to undertake many consultations, not only on the proposal as such but more specifically on the minimum age of senators, and will the House, in the months to come, be able to benefit from her increased knowledge of Canadian public opinion?

[English]

Mrs. Browes: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Hon. Member's suggestion on a Friday afternoon is rather novel. As one of the members of the committee, I will take it as a suggestion. However, I do not see it as having a high priority in the number of issues which will be discussed by the committee across the country. I refer to the suggestion about Senators being 18 years of age. But it could be one of many issues.

I want to emphasize the importance of consultation. I have been most disturbed by the Opposition Party's lack of enthusiasm for consultation on this issue. I would like to quote from two letters which I recently received concerning consultation. One letter read:

This letter is to thank you for your efforts in contacting us, and asking our opinion on such important and germane questions—

The only contact which we had with the previous administration was a stream of letters from their bagmen, which needless to say ended up in our litter bins.

The second letter read:

Your correspondence and efforts to create communication . . . are much appreciated.

I think that the people of Canada will appreciate the consultation concerning Section 15, which is a very important part of the Constitution.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Member has enough time remaining to comment on whether or not subsection (b) of the section to which she referred would allow affirmative action programs, in other words, whether the Government will be allowed to discriminate against somebody

on the basis of sex or age if it concerns an affirmative action program. Does the Hon. Member agree with that principle?

• (1600)

Mrs. Browes: Mr. Speaker, what this Government and myself personally believe we must have is equality of opportunity. I do not believe in the quota system, if that is what the Hon. Member is getting to. I believe that we should have equal opportunity for women, the disabled, and young people in order that they can reach their potential at the highest level so that we really will have equality rights in Canada.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not have an opportunity of announcing the business for Monday. As I mentioned in the usual Thursday House business statement, because we are hoping to make progress with respect to different items of legislation, I am planning to try to consult with my colleagues and work on a day-to-day basis until April 3. At the present time it is contemplated that on Monday we will carry on with Bill C-27, and if we make progress on that Bill on second reading and reference to committee, we would then bring forward Bill C-19 with respect to the reorganization of Bell Canada.

As I have indicated, if there is any change in that sequence, I will certainly advise representatives of each of the Parties at the earliest possible time so that they can prepare themselves for an informed and reasonable debate.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): It being four o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—
MOTIONS**

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the House to proceed to Item No. 178?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.