

Hon. Mr. McElman: Would the honourable Senator Argue permit a question? He referred to President Johnson introducing or suggesting such a measure to the last Congress. Is he aware that this was done only at the stage when it could not possibly pass through the required legislative procedures?

Hon. Mr. Argue: I am not at all aware of that. I followed President Johnson over the years and I believe he sincerely was in support of this measure. I followed President Eisenhower on the same question and he supported the vote for 18-year olds. While it may have happened in one instance, I do not accept the inference that President Johnson supported a lower voting age only in such a way that it could not possibly pass, because I know that for many years he sincerely campaigned for a lower voting age.

Hon. Mr. McElman: Honourable senators, I have a second question on that matter. Senator Argue referred to the "last instance". That is why I raised it, because the measure could not possibly have passed.

I have another question. Senator Argue spoke of a consensus and majority view favouring this. Is he aware that as recently as a year ago, in October 1967, there was a referral of this question to the people of the Province of New Brunswick?

Hon. Mr. Argue: I am aware of that.

Hon. Mr. McElman: And that in 21 out of 22 electoral ridings in that province, the people of New Brunswick voted overwhelmingly against reducing the voting age.

Hon. Mr. Argue: I understand that the voting was something like two to one, opposed to granting the vote at the reduced age of 18. That does not particularly impress me. It does show that people over 21 in the Province of New Brunswick are not in favour of this being done in that province. If one had taken a vote amongst the male residents of Canada 50 years ago, as to whether or not the franchise should have been extended to women, I expect it would have been defeated by 10 to one. The very fact that the people of New Brunswick have had such a vote is an indication to me that support for the 18-year-old vote is gaining ground.

In my native province of Saskatchewan, if anyone dared to have a referral on the question as to whether or not we should take away the vote of those who now have the right to vote at age 18, I am sure that would be defeated almost 100 per cent.

Hon. Mr. McElman: I simply wished to know if the honourable senator was aware of this.

Hon. Mr. Argue: I was aware.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: The honourable member indicated he had contacted the office of the Leader of the Opposition to find his attitude to this matter. Could he tell me if he contacted the office of the Leader of the Government to find out his attitude?

Hon. Mr. Argue: That is interesting. The answer is no. I have been searching public statements. I have searched everything I could get publicly in regard to the view of the Leader of the Government and I could not find anything opposed to this measure. I have been searching the statements of the Leader of the Government and, if I understand them correctly, it is something on which he wants to have advice. I think that is a commendable attitude, although personally I also like the attitude of the Right Honourable Lester Pearson, in the Parliament of that day. He was not able to present such a measure. I am convinced that the way to say to the Government that we want the 18-year-old vote is to vote for this bill.

Hon. Mr. Walker: Would the honourable member be good enough to tell me whether the Right Honourable Mr. Pearson, the former Prime Minister, ever introduced, sponsored, promoted or in any way supported the principle which my friend has enunciated?

Hon. Mr. Argue: I had thought of that. I think the question would be better put to the Leader of the Government. However, there were so many things that Mr. Pearson was able to get through, and so many things he was not able to get through, that I can understand how this particular item—although he supported it himself very firmly—might have gone by the board, in the kind of Parliament he had to deal with.

Hon. Mr. Walker: I have one more question. Would the honourable member perhaps tell us about the views of the honourable Leader of the Government in the Senate?

Hon. Mr. Martin: Perhaps the leader would be allowed to make his own speech.

Hon. Mr. Croll: I understood that Senator Argue was assuming that the statement of the former Leader of the Government was in