

*Canada Elections Act*

them were only 18 years old when they went overseas. That will add to the arguments of the sponsor of the bill.

Before sitting down, may I say that no matter at what age we give the vote to our young people, the vote will give them a responsibility. Since this bill talks of 18 year olds I will confine my remarks to that age group. If our young people are given the responsibility of the vote, they will discharge that responsibility.

**Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield):** The hon. member for Brantford (Mr. Brown) will be happy to know that he has considerable support in this house for his bill. As one looks at the order paper one can see five, perhaps more, similar bills. It was the intention of the hon. member for Prince (Mr. MacDonald), the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) as well as my intention to try to sponsor in common a bill along the lines of this bill. That may be unnecessary should the present bill pass, and I hope that it will. I hope it will not be talked out in a deliberate way.

All members who are present I am sure have had occasion to think a good deal about the merits and possible demerits of extending the franchise to those below 21 years of age, to those who are 18 years old. I do not intend to reassert some of the compelling arguments about why the voting age should be reduced by three years. Other hon. members have spoken about the subject today and in previous years.

One or two arguments for reducing the voting age may be novel, but I wish to advance them. One is that as more and more young people have greater opportunities to further their education and more time for leisure activities, they are more and more being prevailed on by mass media because they represent a commercial market. As a result, a subculture, if I might call it that, is growing up and hardening which affects our young people. There is a growing tendency for the young people of the present day to hive into a subculture of their own.

There may be some positive features from such a development, yet I believe that responsible people do not wish such a tendency to develop unduly and wish to counteract it. One way to counteract such a tendency is to involve our young people more in the running and administering of our political society. Since I cannot put my ideas as eloquently as the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo (Mr. Jamieson) put his ideas when he spoke in the

[Mr. Pugh.]

throne speech debate, perhaps I might be permitted to quote some sentences from his address, to be found at page 24 of *Hansard* for May 9, 1967. He said:

More and more Canadians are becoming aware of this potential. Not many are clear yet as to how it can be achieved. But our young people in particular are convinced that the standard, routine methods are not the answer, nor do our present values bear any great relevance to the conception they have of national objectives. This, I suggest, is why many institutions, including this house, are held in something less than awe by the younger generation which now makes up such a large part of our population.

And here is the nub of this eloquent statement:

We ought not to ignore or dismiss as inconsequential the ideas of these young people, most of whom are committed to the future of their country. They believe in it. Our task is to involve them—

I repeat:

Our task is to involve them constructively in the nation-building process.

Hon. members who applauded that statement and sentiment ought to find it difficult to oppose the implementation of this bill. This bill would give concrete application to the sentiments that the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo expressed a few weeks ago. His remarks were applauded in all parts of the house.

• (5:30 p.m.)

We must as far as we are able involve young people in the ordering of the affairs of their political society. This is one way of doing it. We all believe, I am sure, in the desirability of doing these things gradually, step by step. We allow young people to hold elective office at the age of 21, so it seems to me they should be allowed to vote to help decide who shall hold office at least a few years earlier.

It has been said that one good reason for accepting this bill is that in some of the provinces the electoral law has been changed to allow voting from the age of 18. References were made to Saskatchewan and Quebec which provide for voting from the age of 18. In Alberta and British Columbia, provisions for voting from the age of 19 have already been made. In Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick amendments to the act were passed last session. I know for a fact that one reason a resolution to similar effect failed to pass the Manitoba legislature was that it was