

*Canada Elections Act*

Even if the voting age were reduced to 18, what position would the young people be in if an election were called? Let us suppose there is an election in 1968—and I think there should be so that we can get a change in government. Let us assume that elections will now, occur every four years. There is a sort of changed idea with regard to politics these days, so let us suppose that there will be four-year gaps, as there used to be. A youngster who is 14 years of age in 1968 will have the chance to vote in 1972. But the poor lad who is 15 years of age next year will not vote until he is 19. The chap who is 16 years of age next year will not vote till he is 20, and the person who is 17 years of age in 1968 and who does not get a chance to vote next year will have to wait until he is 21 to vote in 1972. So why do we get so worried about this dropping of the voting age?

Then, Mr. Speaker, how many elections can people vote in? Starting at age 21, if you cast your vote then and live until you are 71 there are 12 opportunities to vote in general elections if they come every for four years.

That is about how the position stands. You do not get as many opportunities to vote as you would like, and some people unfortunately do not take full advantage of those opportunities when they do come. We all know how trying and frustrating it is to a politician when, after all the effort put into a campaign, the election results are turned in, you read of your success or failure the next day, and then find to your astonishment that 20 per cent of the voters did not even bother to go to the polls. These are the people whom you visited and shook hands with, knocked on their doors and said "It is so nice to meet you" and "Is there anything I can do for you?" Some politicians say all these things. Then you find these people just sit at home and look at television to see what sort of program the minister in charge of television has put on at that particular moment.

**Mr. Jack Roxburgh (Norfolk):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear from the hon. members for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill). I am sure I am in their class as well. I will pass over the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) when I say that we may be old in age, old in bones and old in body, but my goodness, after hearing us today everyone ought to realize we are mighty young in heart.

In rising to speak I want first to associate myself with the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River who has brought forward this

[Mr. Churchill.]

bill, for which I commend him. I feel it is certainly time that the voting age were lowered from 21 years to 18 years and the Canada Elections Act amended accordingly.

● (5:40 p.m.)

In the recent elections in New Brunswick the people in the province voted two to one against 18-year-olds having the right to vote. I feel sure that every member of this house, be he old or young, feels that these voters would not have voted as they did had they known the facts concerning this group of young people. There is little doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that the decision of the voters in New Brunswick was affected by the antics of a few long-haired galoots who, by the way, are receiving publicity by means of television, radio and press, far beyond their importance.

As one who has had the privilege of spending a good portion of his life with young people, I have always had a high regard for their ability and over-all balance. Only because of news media and other publicity have we heard so much about irresponsible youth; they are in a minority, just as irresponsible adults are in a minority. Heaven only knows we have plenty of irresponsible adults around these days. There always have been and there always will be the DePoe's, the hippies, and others like them in the world.

Not long ago I had the privilege of appearing before a large group of students at the Annandale High School at Tillsonburg. I spoke for only five minutes and, for the other 55 minutes, to the best of my ability answered questions put to me by these young people. They asked intelligent, practical and sound questions. One could not help being impressed by the thinking behind these questions. On returning home I said to Mrs. Roxburgh, "There is one thing I know for sure, that if the students at the Tillsonburg high school are representative of students in our schools across Canada—and I see no reason why they should not be—we don't need to worry about the future of Canada."

As recently as yesterday my colleague for the constituency of Dollard (Mr. Goyer) and I visited the Port Dover composite school in my riding, where approximately 600 students attended the gathering. We also visited the Simcoe composite school, where over 1,100 students attended. The main topic of interest for the students, of course, was Quebec. The interest was so keen that we were kept by the students well beyond the time limit for