

Canada Elections Act

Actually, this bill which I am sponsoring is Liberal party policy and has been for a number of years. I am simply making an attempt to bring this much proclaimed policy into effect.

Mr. D. V. Pugh (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, first may I congratulate the hon. member for Brantford (Mr. Brown) for having introduced this bill. I must say that I am entirely in agreement with everything he has said with the exception of his last little addition in which he said that this was Liberal policy. My only comment in that regard is, of course, that if it has been Liberal policy it must have been Liberal policy for some time, so why has it not been brought forward by the government or by the previous government when they had a very good opportunity to do so. The very fact that they have not introduced such a measure indicates that probably they are not prepared to do anything about it at this time. In other words, they are giving lip service to a private member's bill knowing full well that it will likely be talked out, even if they have to provide Liberal speakers prior to six o'clock tonight in order to talk it out.

As I have said, I am in complete agreement with the hon. member's bill. He cited authorities for this bill. I am completely aware of those authorities and I am in agreement with them. I should like to add that one of the greatest lifts I get comes from talking to these young people. This has been my experience for the past number of years. During my experience in the schools I found that even before they were 18 years of age they had a very good working knowledge of parliament. It has been my experience that during the question period they are able to carry on asking questions for at least an hour. These are very searching questions; they have to do with the "whys and wherefores" of parliament. They are very constructive questions. The type of questions these young people ask demonstrates that the thinking they are doing is very searching and that they are looking into the future. They know only too well that it is only a question of time before they will be doing all the things which must be done in order to run a country. They realize that they will be taking over just as youth during the past number of years of our existence always has taken over.

I should like to mention an experience I had in respect of a mock parliament which was held in a high school in the city of Penticton. It was an excellent parliament. I

acted as Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed the whole thing tremendously. Of course, I was an excellent speaker. The point is that these boys and girls set up their parties; they set up a parliament. Each and every member had a seat and a desk. There were 265 members including the speaker.

● (5:20 p.m.)

They prepared good questions for orders of the day and received good answers from the government of the day. They were courteously treated. Much time was spent on this and a good job done from start to finish. The debates were short because of the time limit which had to be imposed. Orders of the day went well, as did the three short debates, after each of which there was a vote.

I was struck by the amount of work done by the participants from each party in each debate. The speeches were excellent.

Those taking part in the debates did not know how long they would last, but I know that there were at least four or five other debates on current affairs—incidentally, they were well prepared and thought out. The only disappointment in the whole day was the disappointment of those who were prepared to go on with a further debate. I was told that afterwards.

I tell this little story because it shows that the young people of today—though one has only to look at the young people of previous years who were active in each party to realize that my remarks apply also to the past—are preparing themselves for the future. They do not take the slap-happy attitude that because they were born on this earth somebody else must look after them from the cradle to the grave. They want to participate actively in the affairs of the nation, in whatever cause they may be called.

The hon. member who introduced this bill has said that our young people pay income tax. That is a mundane, monetary subject. Of course they do if they earn money; and they are glad to do so. But there is a much more telling argument in favour of the hon. member's bill. In the last two world wars those of 18—some were even younger—went overseas. I believe they were given the vote when they were overseas. Whether they had the vote or not makes no difference; what matters is that they volunteered in the highest service of this country.

They took on all jobs which their leaders took on, and they performed them without looking for any reward or kudos. Some of