

My reading and study of the functions of the Senate leads me to believe that the greatest authorities writing about the Senate of Canada today are more inclined to emphasize that the functions the Senate should be performing by showing leadership and action where required than by displaying the more conservative approach, important as it is, of being almost exclusively the watchdog of the other place. While from time to time the Senate deals with the indiscretions of the other place, it does not do so on many occasions. I hope this bill is an indication, as has already been made clear by the leader, that this will be an action Senate.

I have known the Government Leader and watched him in operation for many years. I am a great admirer of his and am enthusiastic and impressed by his attitude, his statements, and the kind of outstanding vigorous leadership he is giving to all aspects of the Senate at this time.

While honourable senators will have opinions about this measure, for and against, I hope it will serve the purpose of indicating one of the issues with which this nation must deal, and also indicate what the Senate feels should be done on this issue now. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind, nor do I think there is any doubt in any honourable senator's mind, that the trend in Canada and across the world is to reduce the voting age to as low as 18. It is the trend in the provinces. They are to have an important conference, to which the leader referred. The Province of Saskatchewan has a voting age of 18, Alberta 19, British Columbia 19, Quebec 18, and Prince Edward Island 18. There is pressure on the Legislature of Ontario to reduce its voting age to 18, and it is pressure being exerted by a committee of the legislature itself which made a recommendation to this effect about a year ago. The Tories may be slow at coming round to these kinds of ideas and they may need to be pushed, but unquestionably they are going in this direction.

I do not want in this chamber to say something I should not say and am not privileged to say, but I believe I am privileged to say this. If I am corrected I shall be very happy to change it, but my office contacted the office of the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Stanfield) this morning to discover the official position of the Conservative Party on this important question. The answer received, which I hope I am relating correctly, was that the Leader of the Conservative Party in Canada, the Honourable Mr. Stanfield,

thought it was a fine idea, and that a caucus committee of the federal Conservative Party, which has been set up as a committee on election questions, thought it was a fine idea. They explained that no official position had been taken by the Conservative Party, it is not in the official platform, but after having received this information, in my judgment Mr. Stanfield is showing real leadership to the Conservative Party and the people of Canada by the attitude he is taking on this important question.

I am not a recent convert to this idea. I believe that as a former member of the other place I was the first Member of Parliament in those earlier years to present such a private member's bill, as I am now doing in the Senate. This was some 15 years ago. At that time the opposition to it was very strong. When votes were taken the opposition was overwhelming, but that opposition has been falling away. Over the years fewer and fewer votes have been taken on the question, and now they avoid it like the plague. I forecast that if the Government of Canada on its own initiative—which could happen only because the Senate fails to deal with the matter—re-introduced such a bill, it would pass the other place unanimously. I further predict that when it arrived here, not as our bill but second-hand, it would go through all its stages in a day, or at most a couple of days. We have an opportunity to take the initiative ourselves now, to make a decision ourselves, and, when the debate has been concluded, stand up and vote on this measure and be counted.

I am glad that Senator Croll agreed to support this bill by seconding the motion. I hope he will find it possible, busy as he is, to make a contribution to this debate. He too is not a recent convert to this idea. While I am sure my research does not do him justice over the years, because I am convinced he believed in this many years before the reference I have in my hand, when a vote was taken on this question in the other place on March 15, 1955, I see the name Croll among the "yeas" in support of this measure. I might add that it gives me heart and courage, and leads me to think that Senator Croll and I are on the right track, to see on that list the name "Power, Quebec South". I think "Chubby" Power has set an example in political life that we should all study, which many of us would like to emulate as far as we can.