

Canada Elections Act

Mr. Knowles: They are No. 15, No. 24 and No. 28. My young friend from Vegreville calls out "collusion", but I prefer to call it co-operation. It just so happens that these three members who have presented these three bills are younger chronologically than some of the rest of us in this house, but we who may be a little older chronologically like to feel we are just as young as they are in spirit.

I do not want to take up too much of the time, Mr. Speaker, for that could defeat the bill, which is so easily done in this private members hour. I do want to support the argument the hon. member has made and I earnestly appeal to the government house leader, either at six o'clock today or the earliest opportunity, to refer the subject matter of these three bills and the three resolutions to which I have referred to the standing committee on privileges and elections.

May I point out to the government house leader that it is the usual practice for us to review the Canada Elections Act after each election. This review generally results in amendments being made to that act in the light of the experience at the most recent election. I believe there has been no such amendment of the Canada Elections Act since the election of 1962. I agree that the period from 1962 to 1963 was rather short, and so was the period from 1963 to 1965.

Unless we act soon, we are going to find ourselves going into another election without having had this customary and desirable review of the Canada Elections Act. I believe this question of the age of voters is one subject that ought to be referred to that committee so that it can be dealt with before the next election. I believe too that the report of the committee on election expenses should be referred to that committee. I think the question of the names of the political parties being put on the ballot and other matters of that sort should be dealt with. These are very important matters. It is not good enough to tell us an election is not coming next month or so, because under this government time has a way of slipping by without things getting done. These issues related to the Canada Elections Act are important, and the one that is before us today is extremely important. I should like to indicate my support for the principle of the three bills and the three resolutions to which I have referred, and I urge that their subject matter be referred to the committee on privileges and elections at the earliest possible moment.

[Mr. Fane.]

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am sure you are surprised that I should be participating in this debate. According to the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid), I surely must belong to a generation that is so far removed from the 18-year-olds there is no contact or discussion whatever. I happen to be a person who voted when I was just 18 years of age, so I have had experience in this matter. Yet, even in that period, which the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River would consider to be a period of rather "Middle Age" darkness, I understood what I was doing, and so did all the other people who were with me of similar age. This was in the election of 1917, over in France. Since I was in the army, I had the privilege of voting when I was under 21 years of age. I have had this experience. We were competent at that time and understood what was going on in the world. We did not know anything about television or ministers who were in charge of television. All that was beyond our ken. We knew nothing about sputniks. We did not have radios. However, we knew something about life, and we understood something of human nature. We knew there was a parliament in Canada and we knew people were elected to that parliament.

We were just as competent to cast a vote then, as long ago as that, as these modern era types who are supposed to be so much better educated than the people of the long distant past. I spent 17 years in the field of education attempting to bring along the younger generation. Most of the people who came under my jurisdiction have done rather well in life. However, I must say when I see them now I say to them, "You are all middle aged and to me you look just like all the rest of the middle aged people in Canada; I wonder why I spent so much time trying to bring you along when you were in high school?" I do not see any difference in them now.

I do not raise any objection to this bill or the other bills that are similar. I hope the subject matter is referred to the committee. The time is going to come when the age limit will be lowered. Perhaps, as the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell) pointed out to me a little while ago, it should be done in conjunction with setting the age of legal liability of people. There is a move on foot now in various jurisdictions to consider whether or not age 21 should not come down to 18 from the standpoint of legal status. The hon. member thinks these things go together. When