

Canada Elections Act

The younger generation of Canadians is capable of political thought and action at a level of maturity much higher than that characterizing party politics in this country at the present time. Youth today is quick to detect, and is strongly repulsed by, sham and superficiality. Young people who are looking for purpose, conviction, inspiration, and leadership in matters of private and national concern will not, nor should be expected to, be satisfied by gimmicks and slogans, clichés and promises, and slick but shallow promotional campaigns. There will be little room in the Canada of tomorrow for elections without issues, politicians with philosophical standards, parties without relevant policies, or citizenship without definition and purpose.

Underneath the rhetoric that passage is really saying that young people, the people for whom we are presumably governing this country, can recognize what the truth is behind a great deal of what goes on in political debate and politics in this country. We want to bring them into this field. We want to infuse others with their knowledge and vitality. We want to inject his knowledge and vitality into our political system. I think the only way we can do that and eliminate a great deal of the alienation of our youth is by extending to them the franchise and asking them to accept the responsibilities of citizenship.

The last point with which I shall deal, and very quickly, Mr. Speaker, is that youth is to some extent an interest group. I am informed that 50 per cent of the Canadian population are under 25. A great deal of the money collected at the provincial and federal levels is spent in solving the problems of youth—departments of education, for example, are almost wholly youth oriented—to say nothing of the family allowances paid by the federal government.

Since we are spending so much money on our youth, and all this money is not necessarily being well spent, I think youth have a right to be consulted by boards of governors of universities and politicians and given a role to play even though they are an interest group. The whole political spectrum is made up of interest groups. It seems to me that in the last two years we have spent a great deal of time dealing with the special problems of an interest group, our senior citizens. We have had votes of confidence, bills presented and a whole number of things. There is no reason why equal representation cannot be given to another interest group, the up-and-coming ones, the ones who have a future. It seems to me that as an interest group they have the right to have their voice heard.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I urge the government to send this bill to the standing committee on privileges and elections so that a committee of the house may look into all its implications.

• (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to offer my congratulations to the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) for the excellent case he has made for the bill now before us. I am glad to see that the government house leader is with us just now, and I am particularly pleased to see him going over to congratulate the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River. Perhaps this strengthens our hand. I should like to support the plea that this bill and the other two like it, as well as the three resolutions on this subject which are now on the order paper, be sent to the committee on privileges and elections.

Perhaps the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River will not mind if I point out that he and two other members of this house, one a member of the Progressive Conservative party and one a member of the New Democratic party, made a pact at the beginning of this session. I hope that their efforts succeed.

Mr. Churchill: Disclose their names.

Mr. Knowles: With pleasure, and indeed, I congratulate them. They are the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River who is—well, let us call him a Liberal although he uses another designation.

Mr. Churchill: He cannot get elected as a Liberal. He has to be a Liberal-Labour in order to get elected.

Mr. Knowles: I believe he is a member of the Liberal caucus. Then, there is the hon. member for Prince (Mr. MacDonald), who is a Progressive Conservative and the hon. member for Springfield (Mr. Schreyer), who is a New Democrat. They all have before the house precisely the same bill. We have before us today Bill No. C-12. The bill in the name of the hon. member for Prince is Bill No. C-14, and the bill in the name of the hon. member for Springfield is Bill No. C-26. In addition to these three identical bills, the same three members have three identical resolutions on the order paper under the heading, "Private Members Notices of Motions".

Mr. Fane: Collusion.