

Canada Elections Act

would find that people who are hospitalized during elections find great difficulty in voting.

I would not like to make a guess as to the political leanings of students at the University of British Columbia. However, I would say instead that in our Newfoundland and east coast ridings students are very adept at judging the political affairs of the nation, and I would have no reluctance in allowing these people to vote in any riding in which I might be represented.

I would not like to say that the particular amendment to the act which we are considering was precipitated by any selfish motive, because I am quite aware that the hon. member who sponsored the bill is very interested in trying to promote student franchise across the whole dominion. However, I am not quite certain that the sole criterion of residence will in any way be a solution or even a major step on the thousand mile journey referred to by the hon. member. I found that one of the major problems of disfranchised students during the election was with regard to people moving from university back to their places of residence.

As we all remember, in the last election many students found themselves back home on June 25 after having left the university. This was the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, and I think this is one of the major points which should receive consideration with regard to any amendment of the act governing the affairs of students. If we were to appoint a committee, it would have to spend a year going into all the numerous ramifications of student voting privileges, and even then we would have difficulty in resolving our problems.

• (5:50 p.m.)

I am sure the minister is very concerned about bringing in changes which will benefit students. My only criticism is that I do not feel all the factors governing student voting have been taken into consideration. For example, if I were introducing such an amendment or trying to change the present elections act to bring it into the twentieth century—right now in a good many respects it is mediaeval—I would like to get the opinion of students across the dominion. I should like to know the feeling of students on some of the amendments they would like to see introduced. I do not believe I would fool anybody if I were to stand here today and try to point out to students the way in which the elections act should be modified in order to

help some of the people in my constituency. I feel therefore that the opinion of students should certainly be sought in trying to bring about the changes we deem necessary.

In view of the interest the hon. member has in student voting, I would recommend that perhaps he begin to move in the direction of seeking the advice of students right across the whole dominion. He could point out the nature of the present Canada Elections Act and ask for recommendations from student bodies. It has been my experience in dealing with student bodies in universities that the young people have a good deal of knowledge about the voting privileges of Canadians. The young people in the universities are quite aware that some of their rights are being trampled upon, and some of the benefits which should be enjoyed by all Canadians are being taken away from them. You must seek the advice of students in order to clarify some of these issues.

My only comment, Mr. Speaker, is that I feel with this particular amendment we are leaning in the direction of greater benefits for students in Canada. My criticism is that I do not feel we are going far enough. I would have been much happier if the amendment had been more general in nature. Right now one can think of points across Canada such as Edmonton, Calgary, the University of British Columbia and many eastern communities in which there are 10,000 or 12,000 university students.

I do not know all the ramifications of this particular amendment, and I should like a bit more investigation to be undertaken. We should initiate some kind of program which would gather a consensus from the thousands of students across Canada as to the changes they feel should be brought about in the Canada Elections Act. If we did so, we would be heading in a much better direction. We feel that this amendment and other general amendments should be referred to a committee so that this matter could be settled. I should like to say this is a step in the right direction, but certainly it is not going to satisfy many of the students I know.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): I think it is evident, Mr. Speaker, from certain questions put by hon. gentlemen on both sides of the house that there is no unanimity on the subject matter of the bill. I feel it would be useful if the question could be studied further. My suggestion therefore would be that instead of passing second reading of this bill,