

*Canada Elections Act*

can vote in federal elections at that age. The ultimate logic of this is to give all of them the federal franchise at 18, and this is what Parliament is about to do.

That was in 1963, nearly six years ago, and still nothing has happened though members have brought bills such as this one before the house in each and every session. For this reason I appeal to hon. members today not to be hypocrites but to do something about the situation when they have the opportunity.

One of the greatest reasons for the cynicism of young people about the whole political process today is that nothing ever seems to happen. Part of the fault is attributable to Members of Parliament on both sides of the house. All too often we tend to be redundant and repetitive, talking about the same things year in and year out and using the same speech on occasion after occasion. As a result, parliament has become ingrown and out of touch with many segments of our society.

We give young people responsibility for carrying out many of the laws which are made by our society—I have already mentioned a few of the obligations placed upon them—but we do not allow them to participate in the decision-making process which determines the laws they must obey. All too often we as politicians and society in general adopt a domineering attitude. We think young people are good enough to lick the stamps and do the Joe jobs, the mechanical tasks, but when it comes to making decisions they are just not capable in our eyes.

In the last election campaign the Prime Minister went across the country inviting young people to become involved in the political process. Yet he has been denying them a fundamental right, the right to vote. This is the point at which private Members of Parliament should take action. All of us know that young people are ready to become involved. This happened in the course of my own campaign during which hundreds of young people participated actively in making the decisions as well as knocking on doors.

There is a growing awareness in the youth community of events around them, an awareness which is logical, given the society in which we live, a society in which automation and technology play a leading part. Information flows in quickly from all over the world. We can see evidence of the starvation in India and Biafra, of the condition of those

who live in urban ghettos and the depressed areas of Canada. In such circumstances young people today are more aware of events in the world around them than they were even ten or 15 years ago. Because of advances in technology, people today possess many of the mechanical and quantitative goods for which their parents strove years ago and as a result more stress is placed on the quality of life and on values other than material values. Young people are more keenly aware of these things than they were 20 years ago. Indeed, it appears somewhat ludicrous that we should still be talking about lowering the voting age in the year 1969.

We hear a good deal about the generation gap and the difficulties some find in understanding young people. There is one way in which we can help improve this situation and it is by getting young people involved in doing things others do. If we ignore them, we cannot understand them, and this is the point at which things become very dangerous.

I should like to outline some of my reasons for thinking that young people should be allowed to vote. First of all, I consider it to be a right. Moreover, I believe they are mature enough to vote as intelligently as anybody else. In many provinces they reach legal age at 16 or 18. They must then be responsible for their conduct, they must appear in court when summoned and go on to gaol if sentenced. They are liable for military service if called upon. It is ironic to me that a person should be considered old enough to kill or be killed for his country when we do not give him the franchise here at home. They are considered intelligent enough to be trained to fight but not intelligent enough to vote.

Today many young people are organizing groups in an attempt to have the voting age lowered. One organization known as "Down Three" has circulated leaflets to all Members of Parliament on the issue of military service and I should like to quote one paragraph:

● (5:10 p.m.)

There is a great deal of inconsistency in the status of a young person in Canada. Eighteen-year olds, in time of war, can be conscripted for military service. Are 18-year olds adults or children? If adults, surely they should have the right to vote in time of peace, as well as in time of war.

This is the kind of inconsistency that appears in our society time and time again.