

Canada Elections Act

directly to my first point, that I wish to support the bill because I think its merit must be obvious to all.

However it seems to me that the main urgency of a bill like this has to do with the fact that it appears to many of us, among whom I wish to be counted, that within a very short time we will be lowering the voting age in Canada to below the present level of 21. If and when we should do this it seems to me that, whereas there are some thousands of people now who are able to vote while they are at university since many go to university at the age of 17 or 18 it is obvious that many thousands more of them are involved. Therefore this bill takes on an even greater urgency and seems to me to be even more important. I think all members of the house will agree that this is a most desirable measure on two counts, the first of which is that we enable as many people to vote as possible, especially the younger people, and second, that if possible we lower the voting age.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman), who introduced the bill, referred to the Canada Elections Act as an antique. It seems to me that antiques are something that should be placed in museums and looked at but not handled, used and worked with. All hon. members know that the whole point of the Canada Elections Act is that it shall serve a useful purpose, not only in the present but in the future. Therefore I am concerned that this bill is a rather small item in what seems to me to be a very large cause. In other words, we should be entering into a rather significant revision of the act rather than altering a small section of it.

The third point I want to make is this, that to be against this bill would make one seem to be against youth, and in a culture such as ours to be against youth is rather like being against motherhood. Everybody is for youth. I will therefore underscore the fact that we must continually do what we can to give all young people in Canada a sense of involvement.

Earlier on in the day reference was made in the house to the very outstanding speech of the Minister of National Health and Welfare on October 9 in the city of Hamilton, one that I would urge all hon. members to read if they have not already done so. In it the minister spoke about the sense of isolation, of phyness and of meaninglessness that is especially common to young people. It seems to me that this is not new, because it was brought out as long ago as in 1951, when

[Mr. McBride.]

Salinger's book entitled "Catcher in the Rye" came out and caused many lifted eyebrows. The whole point of the book was that a young man by the name of Holden Caulfield perceived the essential phyness of the society surrounding him. Anything we can do in the parliament of Canada that will say to the young people, come and share with us in shaping the destiny of our country, in becoming involved and committed, I think is a good thing.

It is only on rare occasions that I agree with the approach of the government of the province of Alberta. However, I believe there is one useful thing they have done, and that is to establish a department of youth within that province. The second of their aims and objectives reads as follows:

To stimulate interest in youth training for leadership in social, cultural, business and public affairs.

I wish to emphasize particularly the last term "public affairs" because it seems to me to be one of the paramount purposes of parliament, namely to encourage greater interest in public affairs among the young people of Canada. And I think this measure goes a long way toward doing that. This is a small bill and it does not do enough of what needs to be done to the Canada Elections Act, but it is useful and in a sense it honours youth. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member opened a tin of worms when he brought up today the matter of the Canada Elections Act. In the few weeks recently when I was engaged in electioneering I do not think there was anything which came to my attention as frequently as the matter of the Canada Elections Act, which gives the Canadian people the right to vote, to elect their representatives and to choose a form of government.

I think the whole business of people who are in the process of moving from one place to another should receive attention through amendments to the Canada Elections Act. I remember that during the last election quite a few construction workers in my constituency who had moved into the surrounding communities were disfranchised as a result of not being able to get back home in the few hours in which they were relieved from employment that day. Quite a number of people in the maritime areas are at sea during periods of elections. Again I say that if one were to review the Canada Elections Act in detail he