

*Indian Affairs*

elections but cannot vote in their own band elections. Therefore, without any further comment I hope that this bill will be referred to the committee.

**Mr. Elias Nesdoly (Meadow Lake):** Mr. Speaker, I shall not take up very much of the time of the House. I am totally in favour of this bill. As one who comes from a very progressive province where the voting age has been lowered for some years to include persons 18 years of age, I think the same privilege ought to be accorded to the Indian people of Saskatchewan and across the whole of Canada.

The hon. member for Kingston and The Islands (Miss MacDonald) was a little concerned about the fact that Indian people were not consulted. This is not a compulsory act. If the voting age should be lowered to 18 it would not mean that in effect they must vote if they do not wish to do so. I know there are people in my province of various religious denominations who do not vote in any election. This is their privilege and prerogative. In fact, when I visited various homes during the last election campaign many people told me that they did not intend to vote for any of us because they did not believe any of us were any damn good. I suppose there are Indian people, whether 18, 19 or 25 years of age, who would not vote in any event.

This is merely a right and privilege which all Canadians have. It is not mandatory. This is a very simple amendment which I hope will pass. I wish, however, that the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) had gone a little deeper into the Indian Act and suggested other amendments such as amendments which would lay some basis for aboriginal land rights, which would lay some basis for better protecting and developing their treaty rights, which would lay some basis for a full and equal settlement of their land claims, and amendments which would perhaps provide for native control and development of projects with the help of federal funds and resources but under the control of the native people. Perhaps there could be amendments which could deal with the whole issue of education so far as the native people are concerned.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. I do not wish to limit or restrict the hon. member, but I have difficulty following him and relating his remarks to the bill that is under consideration at this time. Of course, the bill relates to Indians but it concerns the lowering of the voting age. I do not think this debate should provide an opportunity for general argument or the suggestion of other solutions to different problems.

**Mr. Nesdoly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid I was carried away a little. However, I am totally in favour of lowering the voting age to 18. It is a right which every Indian should have, just as every Canadian has. They would still have the privilege of not exercising this right if they did not wish to do so. With that note I shall sit down and take part in the vote.

[Translation]

**Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton):** Mr. Speaker, we are greatly pleased to support Bill C-16, to lower to 18 the voting age of Indians.

We agree that all Indians whatsoever should enjoy equal treatment. It is unfortunate that this should not always have been the case. In fact, they should enjoy the same rights as all other Canadians and we do not see how they should be denied such rights.

Today, Indians have developed much more than they did in the past. We find among them, as in all other groups, people of great culture and highly developed skills.

I believe they should be granted every advantage of which others have availed themselves. They should enjoy them and we are happy to give unqualified support to the bill before us, bringing a little more justice to a class of society which has not fared as well as it should.

We would like them to enjoy the same advantages as the other Canadians and have the right, at election time, to say what they think through the exercise of their franchise. We cannot deny them this right, because it is only fair. We must be fair to all groups of citizens; the Indians must enjoy the same rights and prerogatives as the other citizens.

I shall not say any more. I thank the hon. member who has kindly introduced Bill C-16 which we support fully. I conclude my remarks so as to let others participate in the debate. We agree that this bill should be referred to committee or passed immediately.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Is the House ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, because of the progress that has been made, unless the House disagrees I would suggest that since this bill has been referred to the committee the House might agree to call it five o'clock.

**Mr. Bell:** That is a very good idea, Mr. Speaker. I hope the government has noticed that the progress was made because of co-operation here and that they will co-operate when we have private bills before the House which should go to committee.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, may I just say, "Hear, hear!"

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Is it agreed that we call it five o'clock?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

At 4.35 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.