

Canada Elections Act

men came to the point where they could choose right from wrong or when they should have the right to take part in government as mature human beings? It was something arbitrarily set by somebody. I do not know who the nincompoop was but I have no doubt that he was just as ill-advised as I would be if I said the age should be 17.

The hon. member who preceded me referred to Dr. Neatby's book. He is right. It caused a furore but I think that is all you can say for it. Whether there is any basis of knowledge or understanding underlying what she says is a question that is much debated.

I would suggest that we get down to earth and realize that our objection to this step is the old reluctance that has come down through the ages, the old habit of wishing to limit the franchise or participation in government to as few people as possible. The young people today at the age of 18—particularly those who have not had the opportunity to go to university but who have had to take up the responsibilities of citizens before they were 21—are entitled to the vote, and we should not refuse it to them.

Mr. G. C. Nowlan (Digby-Annapolis-Kings):

Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to take part in this debate, but in view of the comments made by the hon. member who has just taken his seat, I should like to say at least one or two words. Personally I have always followed the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. MacInnis) with a great deal of interest and usually in what he has said I have found much to commend itself to one's reason and one's judgment. However, I think this afternoon he has departed somewhat from his usual custom—if he has not gone quite to the extent of being a rabble rouser—in suggesting that those who are opposed to this bill are guilty of reaction and of living in the past. I do not subscribe to that view and I do not think it is fair of the hon. gentleman to make that suggestion. I do not think that he has any basis whatever for making it. He can perhaps speak with authority on the position of women in public life and the reason for giving women the vote. I will accept his judgment on that matter.

However, I should like to put myself in the position of saying that I think I know about as much as he does about the young people in this country. I happen to be the father of five children, all of whom now have the vote. They are now old enough to vote intelligently and well because they are 21 years of age, even though it has taken a little while to train them to vote right. I can tell the

hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway that not one of them would accept his suggestion that it is desirable, necessary or fair that they should be given the vote at the age of 18. I have had the fortunate privilege of having children in my house, living as I do in a university town, and entertaining scores and scores of them. I am not speaking grandiloquently. Over a number of years scores of them have come in and out on Sunday nights and on week nights and they have discussed these matters.

I agree with the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. Enfield) who spoke a few minutes ago on the difficulties of the situation. I think he was expressing the view of the young people in connection with this matter. With the problems being as complex as they are, they do not think that they have any God-given right to vote at the age of 18. In fact, they do not think they should vote at the age of 18. In fact, some of them wonder if we should have the age set at 21. I wonder if this is not a form of escapism that people are trying to get in hiding behind this matter and saying "There is something wrong with public life", yet bringing in youngsters of 18 to vote. What about ourselves? How many adults today are failing to accept their responsibility? How much do we fail in this House of Commons in impressing upon the public the necessity for dealing with these matters? Until we accept that responsibility, I do not think we should try to extend the franchise.

Mr. Speaker: It is now six o'clock.

On motion of Mr. Nowlan the debate was adjourned.

Mr. Speaker: At eight o'clock the house will resume consideration of the business that was interrupted at five o'clock.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

PENSION ACT

AMENDMENTS TO PROVIDE FOR ADOPTED CHILDREN, CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATION, ETC.

The house resumed consideration in committee of Bill No. 339, to amend the Pension Act—Mr. Lapointe—Mr. Robinson (Simcoe East) in the chair.

The Chairman: Order. I understand when the committee rose previously we were discussing clause 2 and the amendment proposed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Shall the amendment carry?