

represents one-eighth of the voting population. I need not tell you how influential that group can be—but here is the point. There is no reason to believe that we are in fact talking about a voting *group*. By and large, Americans over eighteen have mature, independent and *varied* attitudes about State and National problems. There is every reason to believe that they will exercise their voting privilege with maturity and individual judgment.

The second, and the only other statistic to which I will refer, is to me, both astounding and crucial. Close to 2,300,000 students graduated from high school in the summer of 1965. They represented a 92.8 per cent increase in annual graduates over a ten year period and a 14.1 per cent increase over 1964. Undoubtedly, the general population increase was a contributing factor, but since total enrollment over the same ten year period jumped by only 42.8 per cent, it is fair to say that today, 50 per cent more of our student population is graduating from high school than did ten years ago. And today, in New York State, all students graduating from high school must have passed at least three full-year courses in American history,

including the study of national, state, and local government.

To this, add the facts that today's student has a greater interest in public affairs, takes a greater part in helping to solve national problems, and receives far more education on the average than his parents did, and you have an equation which, roughly stated, directly equates today's eighteen-year-old with the twenty-one-year-old of years past. In short, he has all of those essential qualities which we have a right to expect from the responsible voter. In sum, the 1777 standard of "full-age" is no longer an accurate gauge of maturity and responsibility.

Any cut-off age is going to be arbitrary as to some of the people. Our concern, however, must not be with numbers and quantity. Quality is the true gauge,—and as quality has improved, it has become incumbent upon us to seek total involvement of our mature population in America's decision-making process—by affording them access to the ballot box. The lesson of the classroom will be far more relevant when the opportunity to vote is real.