

STUDENT STUDENT STUDENT

VIEW VIEW VIEW

**'nothing
is sacred
about age
21'**

An 18-year-old majority rights' bill has been kicking around in the Missouri General Assembly since 1952. Soon it will again come up on the floors of both the House and Senate. Those of us who have been working toward its passage are optimistic.

I am one of many Mizzou students who work with the Associated Students of Missouri (ASM), a state-wide organization that began here on Campus two years ago and is an outgrowth of the Missouri Students Association's Legislative Seminars Committee. We still work with the committee in coordinating Campus support for, among other issues, majority rights.

In recent weeks we have had a letter writing campaign — hundreds of letters have been sent to legislators by students from Mizzou. In fact, several legislators have told me that they are hard pressed to answer the flood of letters.

Much of the research on the effects of majority rights has been done by ASM. In the statutes, we found over 260 different areas that would be affected by lowering the majority age to 18.

Specific changes would include the right to marry without parental consent at 18, the right to make contracts, the right to enter apprenticeships and professions, the right to purchase and consume liquor, and many others.

But researching the issue has not been the most significant contribution students have made as they



Rich Davison, a senior in the College of Administration and Public Affairs, is from Chesterfield, Missouri. He hopes to work, after graduation, in state or federal government.

have worked during both the 1972 and the 1973 sessions.

Critically important has been the students' direct contact with the legislators.

Students have spoken directly with senators and representatives to find out their opinions. If a legislator was wavering or if he was opposed to the bill, ASM sent students to talk to him and present facts in support of majority rights. We told legislators, for example, that 45 percent of the persons in the state between 18 and 21 are not in school and are presumably independent — yet they cannot contract for a car.

Students have also testified before both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees and the House Local Government Committee. By testifying, students were able to show legislators that young people could participate, take questions (both hostile and friendly), and respond with knowledge instead of emotionalism and fuzzy logic.

We have demonstrated that youths between the ages of 18 and 21 are mature enough to handle the rights and responsibilities of majority.

Most important, it was the students' presence that spoke the loudest. We have displayed our willingness to work in the political arena and

bring about change by following the rules of the game. The rapport that has been developed between today's youth and the politicians is what demonstrates, more than anything else, the willingness of today's youth to accept today's responsibilities.

Responsibilities change with the times and so does the age at which individuals assume them. Look at the history of majority rights. There is really nothing traditional or sacred about the age 21. Throughout the centuries, societies have fluctuated about the age for legal adulthood. In ancient Rome, the magic age was 14; in Sparta, 30.

Here in the United States, 18-year-olds are considered mature enough to vote to select the leaders in our country, state and local governments; 18-year-olds died in Vietnam; 18-year-olds may be tried for criminal offenses as adults.

Missouri has been holding back its youth. Let today's youth become legal adults at age 18. Let them work at today's jobs and help our society instead of being considered second class citizens, treated here as adults and there as children before the law.

It's ironic, but majority rights just might pass in the General Assembly this year. After all, the bill was first introduced in 1952, and that makes the issue 21 years old. Perhaps it has reached the last requirement for maturity. — *Rich Davison*