

Citizenship

courts, if they have \$100 for a lawyer, and appeals follow without end.

I think that these problems are very important and should be dealt with this afternoon. We should consider the minister's idea, and in particular his views, to be able to get rid of all these problems we have with the immigrant.

In Washington for instance, where I went to discuss this problem of immigration, I was very surprised to learn that they receive immigrants they cannot get rid of afterwards. In American terms they describe them as people who jumped over the fence. We would call them people who jumped over the border. They lost control in some southern states, that is to say they have on their territory some people who are not American citizens and who cannot become American citizens because of their status. To begin with, they do not have the first documents allowing them to enter the United States. I think that we will be in a somewhat similar position next year in Canada with the Olympic Games, in the area of Montreal. We should not be the patsies of some people coming here to have a good time, who like the country so much that they want to stay here for ever. This bill has been before the House for more than a year. First reading was September 10, 1974, second reading May 21, 1975. More often than not, we have to discuss in the House economic and social problems confronting the country, but today on second reading of this citizenship bill may we point out a positive element, the fact that we live in a great country.

If these immigrants who came here anxious to become Canadian citizens were more aware of what is going on here—and this is the key to the problem—I think it would be much easier either to leave them in their homeland or to know exactly who those people are, and finally whom we must receive. When immigrants come to Canada, generally they are very glad to see our large horizons, our incredible natural resources, our great production capacity, a young and dynamic people, a short history but full of courage and determination, and above all peaceful nation. We always were peaceful people, most of us respectful of ourselves and others: that is why these immigrants want to stay here.

But when we travelled through the country, particularly in Montreal, Winnipeg and Edmonton, we met many not so quiet people. They are not willing to discuss at length before getting what they want. They would like to become Canadian citizens on their arrival. They would like to enjoy all the privileges of full citizenship a month or two after landing here. It is unpleasant to sit on a committee to hear witnesses who threaten you with their fists and say: We want this, we want that. Those on the committee are not very impressed and we do not feel like accepting them as citizens.

I met a man in Montreal who has been living here for eight years. He is a student. As I said earlier, he is a perpetual university student. He thought people resented him because he was black. He was completely wrong because he was accepted as a Canadian, five years ago, according to the law. But the moment he got his Canadian citizenship, he began to live on the fringe of the law. He told me: Mr. Beaudoin, I did this, I did that, and after all, I

[Mr. Beaudoin.]

am a Canadian, they cannot send me back home, I don't care.

I think we should be cautious when it comes to accepting people like that, if we wish to have a responsible country and preserve the outlook that we all cherish.

This is why I believe the suggestion of reducing the waiting period down to three years is a bad one because for three years an applicant can live on the fringe of society, especially if he is working in a municipal department, and no one can find out about him. Whereas if he has to wait five years for citizenship it is easier to catch him for wrongdoing or trace his file and complete his records and therefore know more about his past.

Clause 10 of the act provides that the minister may, if he deems it desirable, grant a citizenship certificate and so forth. The bill under study provides for the minister to grant citizenship and for each case to be referred to the citizenship court.

● (1630)

I think this procedure makes no sense because if citizenship is granted to an immigrant prior to his appearing before the citizenship court and before the court finds something to kick about or decides to deport him he will appeal to another court or say that it is contrary to human rights, and so on.

I think the law is much too lenient under clause 10.

The 21 judges must make decisions but they cannot decide in a definitive way. Speaking of the 21 citizenship judges the Secretary of State stated on December 9, 1974, before the Calgary Canadian Citizenship Council, and I quote:

The twenty-one citizenship judges all across Canada play a key role in this area. They work in large cities and tour the centres around those cities as well as remote areas. The new legislation gives them the legal title of citizenship judge. I am sure you will understand that the response of the government to the needs of potential citizens is determined in a large measure by the attitude of the men and women who are appointed citizenship judges.

Here I would like to say as an aside that the minister did point out that knowing whether or not an immigrant should be accepted as a Canadian citizen depended on the formation of the judges, men and women, on their personal training. I continue to quote:

In their near judicial role, those citizenship judges make decisions about certain specific points set out in the law. For example, they are the ones who determine if an applicant has an adequate knowledge of one of the official languages and if he understands our country well enough to become a Canadian citizen. During the hearings and the ceremonies, citizenship judges act as ambassadors of the Canadian people. They fulfill their traditional task with dignity and enthusiasm and contribute greatly to make the citizenship ceremony a significant symbol of entry into Canadian life. In a larger context, they act as public relations officers and often address schools and clubs to explain the status of Canadian citizens—the rights, privileges and obligations that it entails.

Under Bill C-20, the minister can no longer refuse arbitrarily to grant citizenship, which makes it impossible to use arbitrarily such a power without public or legislative sanction. The governor general however has the power to refuse to grant citizenship, but only if he judges that to do so would be prejudicial to the security of Canada or contrary to public order in Canada.