

After Recess

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. FULTON: Mr. Chairman, when the committee rose at six o'clock I was in the process of discussing the objections of the Minister of Mines and Resources to the present amendment. As far as I could understand, they were largely a repetition of what he said last night. My answer must be, as it was last night, that if he foresees in the present amendment danger to his powers under the Immigration Act, then under section 21 of the present bill as it now stands there is preserved to the Secretary of State all the powers necessary to protect this country against the danger, largely fancied I think, of the undesirable British subject who may be an immigrant to this country. I can only repeat what I said on a previous occasion that if the Minister of Mines and Resources has any specific fears on that score and if he does not feel that there exists ample power under section 21 it would be within the rights of this parliament to amend that section to give him all the powers he requires.

That being the case, and in view of the fact that there was such a large degree of unanimity this afternoon as to the desirability of preserving the present status of British subjects in this dominion, I would close simply by repeating my request to the Secretary of State that he explain to the committee the meaning of his words which are to be found on page 503 of *Hansard*:

Under this bill we are seeking to establish clearly a basic and definite Canadian citizenship which will be the fundamental status upon which the rights and privileges of Canadians will depend.

I ask him to explain how those words can be reconciled with his subsequent statement that a British subject from any part of the empire coming to this country must wait for five years before he acquires the status of a Canadian citizen.

Mr. GREEN: There are one or two points I should like to mention this evening. The Secretary of State said on Monday, as reported on page 1015 of *Hansard*:

... the bill will not and does not remove one iota of the rights and privileges that are now enjoyed by British subjects in Canada.

He has repeated that at different times, both in his remarks and by way of interjection when other members were speaking. I think he is not correct. In the first place, as the bill was originally presented a British subject had to appear in the naturalization court. That certainly changed his rights; it changed his position and was a detriment. The government has admitted that by with-

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drawing the provision and providing that he need not appear in naturalization court. Then there are other rights and privileges at stake, and I refer you, Mr. Chairman, and the ministers concerned to the election act which was passed last year by the province of Quebec. This is chapter 15 of the statutes of that province. Section 47 sets out the qualifications of electors, which are as follows:

1. Has been domiciled in the province for at least twelve months immediately preceding the date fixed for the enumeration;
2. Is domiciled in a polling subdivision on the first day fixed for the enumeration;
3. Is of the full age of twenty-one years on or before the polling day;
4. Is of Canadian nationality;
5. Is not affected by any disqualification from voting contemplated by this act.

I understand that before that the provision was that an elector must be a British subject. Here is one provincial government that has the qualification that a voter must be of Canadian nationality. There is a distinct loss of rights if the citizenship bill now before the committee goes through in its present form. I realize that the Dominion Elections Act contains the qualification that a voter must be a British subject and we have had the assurance of the minister that that act will not be changed. However, the minister is not in a position to say that provincial election acts will not be changed.

Mr. MARTIN: We have no power.

Mr. GREEN: Here is one instance where a change has been made less than a year ago and I have no doubt that a similar change will be made in Saskatchewan. It will probably be only a matter of time before changes will be made in other provinces or in other legislation. For example, there is the old age pension legislation in which a change may be made. The minister is stretching a point when he says that no rights or privileges are being taken away by this bill.

We have asked in this amendment that there be a distinction made between the British subject and the alien. The basic reason for that request is that the person coming here from a partner nation in the commonwealth has had training in our British institutions, in our parliamentary government, and has the same general outlook. I do not think there is a person on the government side of the house who would deny that a person coming from another British nation is better qualified to become a Canadian citizen because of his experience and background than the person who comes from another country such as Russia or China. We are asking that that difference be acknowledged by this bill.