

*Canada Elections Act*

should accept the legislation of that jurisdiction, there is nevertheless some sort of obligation, and surely we don't scorn moral obligations as being trifling, to a group of people who came here on the clear understanding that in reference to the right to vote they were in a particular category. I think when we reach a stage where we come to the conclusion that this right, once extended, even though perhaps inappropriately extended, the least we can do is provide for some transition period. Surely in equity, in fairness, this is something that would commend itself. To that extent, I would be reluctant to support the suggestion of the hon. member for Matane, who proposed the first amendment. I think the drastic removal of rights which have been given and accepted in good faith would not be an appropriate course of action.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I am not at all reluctant to accept the idea that we should move toward Canadian citizenship as being the criteria, and I think at another time we should look at our Citizenship Act. As it stands now, people have to wait too long before becoming eligible for citizenship. We have been too careless and casual in advancing the virtues of full citizenship.

There are thousands of Canadian citizens who never thought that the formality of moving from the status of British subject resident in Canada to that of Canadian citizen had not, ipso facto, been taken through the exercise of the franchise given them. So we have to move with an eye to equitable treatment of people who were given that right. As I see it, it has nothing to do with superiority or discrimination or anything of that kind. It just happens that, in the wisdom of our forefathers, rights were vested and now we have to divest, to rearrange, to alter. Let us achieve this in a manner somewhat less drastic and perhaps a little more considerate than is suggested in this amendment.

This is not at all incompatible with the suggestion made by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris. My plea is for one last effort, not at restricting the Commonwealth reciprocation in this deal, but at trying to expand it. I do not think the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce was listening. I specifically said I was not referring to the United Kingdom, but I did mention some countries which extend this reciprocation to us and some which do not. I expressed the hope that we might try to broaden that base.

As to the merits of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra and the document presented by the minister, I think perhaps in the long run the aim is not dissimilar. Perhaps I should be asking forgiveness for defending the government point of view over that of a member, but I think perhaps the bill that we have before us is a little more positive. You do not hang up an administrative Damocles sword and say "In five years you had better be a citizen or else." Instead you say, as the bill has it, "These rights have been accepted and satisfied up to a certain point; henceforth there is another category."

**Mr. Deachman:** May I ask the hon. gentleman a question?

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Delighted.

**Mr. Deachman:** Does he agree that it would be desirable to set up two classes of British subject, as would be done by the amendment proposed in the bill? Does he look forward to that as a good way of settling the question before the House, that there be two classes of British citizen in Canada, one with voting privileges and one without? This is what will happen if this measure is adopted.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** I suppose, under the hon. member's suggestion, those who did not follow his example and stayed in the country would be in a different class from those who did, so you would have two classes.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that we can arrive at some equitable and just solution. I think in this committee of the whole we are maintaining the atmosphere which prevailed in the standing committee, and that was very good. All of us are trying to broaden the franchise, to iron out any inequities and to give to as many people as possible the right to vote. We are not thinking of colonialism or discrimination. If I might be pardoned a personal note, my ancestors came to this part of the world in a prison boat, not very gently manned by the authorities of Westminster, so it is not with any sympathy for Westminster—

**An hon. Member:** For sheep stealing?

**Mr. Macquarrie:** No, it was not sheep stealing. It was something that happened at Cul-loden. If any hon. members from Quebec think unkindly of James Wolfe, perhaps they could check what my ancestors thought of that ruthless gentleman.

**Mr. Cafik:** I would like to make a few comments in respect of the amendment before the House, Mr. Chairman. I was very