

*Citizenship*

new way of life. We holidayed in Sweden. That was an interesting but difficult experience. When it came time to leave, I thought what it would mean to me if I had to stay there and make my way and earn a living in that language. The contemplation of what I should face left me breathless when I thought of the courage of those who emigrated to this land.

One thing I do know, Mr. Speaker: if I had decided to stay there, I should not have made any demands on the Swedish government; I should not have asked it to take care of me. Staying would have been my decision, my responsibility, and I should have had to adapt my life to what I found there. I suspect that I could, just possibly, have fitted into the Swedish scheme of things and it might have been possible for me to make a decision to stay. I know that such a decision would have been far more difficult in Japan because the process whereby a person from another country becomes a citizen of that crowded island is difficult and rare indeed.

No one that I know has ever criticized the Japanese for this, because their land has long been the byword for a crowded land. We, too, are becoming a crowded country. Things in this land have changed, too, and what used to be regarded as wide open spaces, are not wide open any more. We hear this theme all the time from ecologists, naturalists and others and learn that many of our so-called vast, empty spaces are virtually incapable of supporting human life. We also hear it from demands of native peoples who increasingly ask for vast sections of this country to be set aside for them. Therefore, we should no longer look on the vast spaces of Canada as empty places to be filled by all who want to come here. Indeed, as someone said earlier, conditions have changed in ways not easily understood.

Clearly, we must consider carefully the move to a residency requirement of three years rather than the previous one of five years. Incidentally, I wish to make it understood that the purpose of my preamble was to remove any suggestion of racism or of ethnic discrimination in the comments I am making. I say this bearing in mind this country's form of democracy. As I said about ten years ago in this House, I consider our democracy to be a plant of tender growth. I know that an hon. member who is now a colleague in this party, the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather), said that he considered it a sturdy plant. I suspect that in the years which have passed he has come to appreciate that our specimen of democracy is much rarer and of much more tender growth, than he suspected.

What disturbs me most about this change to three years' residency as proposed in the bill is this: the time span is less than the life of a parliament, which can extend to five years. It is less than the customary four-year of a majority parliament. If this bill is passed, many immigrants will be eligible to vote in the first election of which they have experience in this country. There are some who say that three years is ample time to learn all about this country. I, however, have my doubts. During the last election campaign, a candidate in my constituency adopted a very shotgun approach to electioneering. He made a vast number of charges of all kinds. One could pay very little attention to any of them. One charge that he made was that the government of this land was influencing elections

through its immigration policy. The charge was ridiculous. Immigrants had to wait five years before becoming citizens. He did not seem to know that Bill C-20 was in the works.

● (1700)

But if this bill is passed, any government that follows in this land can be open to the charge that it influences elections through its immigration policy. It will be easy to open the doors immediately after one election and to make voting citizens before the next. It cannot be done now. Of all aspects of the bill, that should be given the most careful consideration by those who are proposing it.

In spite of anything the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) may have said, all the calculations were made on that side. This bill has been calculated, and calculated carefully. It should be delayed until legislation follows on the immigration recommendations made by the standing committee on immigration. We are being hasty in bringing forward this bill at this time when the committee which laboured long and travelled far made a report but we do not yet know what the government is going to do with it.

From that report comes some very interesting statistics and suggestions. One such statistic is that in 1974, Canadian immigration offices received over 750,000 inquiries regarding the possibility of immigrating to Canada in 1974. I suspect that when some of those people made their initial inquiry, they did not know that this land had a five-year waiting period. However, I suspect that the vast majority did know. I further suspect that the five-year waiting period would not slow anyone. Obviously, it did not. One can almost be categorical about this. In spite of the waiting period, they made an inquiry about coming to this land.

I cannot understand, when the pressure at the gates is so great and when population of this country is exercised about the immigration policy to the extent that it is—to the extent that it was not only necessary to have the green paper, but for the select committee to travel; and as we all know, the travels were rather riotous—why should we reduce the time. It is not an acceptable business practice to hold a fire sale when the demand is rising—40 per cent off in this particular case. There are very few countries in the world who are accepting immigrants at the present time. The pressure is enormous.

I am constantly amazed at the ingenuity of people attempting to reach this land and obtain a foothold here. One must have every sympathy with them. Of course, the motivation is twofold. It is economic opportunity, but surely it is also political freedom. We must be very concerned about the heritage of political freedom that we have. As I electioneered, as I am sure most people do, I talked to many peoples. I found that far too often this is held too lightly by Canadians. Far too many people press upon us a wish for a benevolent dictatorship. Too few people understand what is involved in the principle of a responsible government, or in the constitutional monarchy, the best guarantee of political freedom ever invented.

When I am not here, I teach social studies. I work with people at the end of secondary school. I am shaken, as many other people have been shaken, by their total lack of knowledge on this subject. What really shook me was to receive, a few months ago, a rather well put-together pamphlet from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce about