

*Citizenship*

anyone who is not normally resident there, whereas in this legislation it refers to individuals who are not citizens of Canada. As I understand it, in the previous act the reference was to aliens.

As I mentioned before six o'clock, there seems to be a pattern of an attempt to modernize and update citizenship but there seems to be difficulty in coming to grips with the reality of the situation. I refer to the experiences of Mrs. Beach in her so far frustrated attempts to regain Canadian citizenship. The minister has indicated that the change in the law which is already before us is not likely to satisfy her predicament. In the same way the situation with respect to clause 33 will not satisfy the growing concern that exists in provinces like Prince Edward Island, or Nova Scotia, or Ontario, or British Columbia, or perhaps in any of the provinces and territories over the rapid increase in foreign ownership.

● (2010)

Various segments of our economy are under foreign ownership. Sometimes ownership is exercised exclusively by non-Canadian subjects. Perhaps the Secretary of State will explain, either in this debate or at the first opportunity in committee, how he proposes to deal with a situation which is of concern to provinces like Prince Edward Island which are worried about the extent of foreign ownership of their land.

I notice the presence in the House of the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan)) who shares with me, I am sure, my concern for Prince Edward Island. I hope he will communicate his concern to the secretary of State. Although this matter is not dealt with in the legislation before us, we shall need to look at it seriously and introduce amending legislation. I want to know how the Secretary of State proposes to deal with this situation. Perhaps he will give an explanation in committee. Unfortunately he did not touch on the matter in his presentation on second reading. I hope he will touch on it in committee and explain how we can make our legislation fit the needs and realities of the modern day.

As I said earlier, the bill, by mentioning certain new terms, seems to acquire in the opinion of some, let us say, and air of modernity. This is not sufficient, and the meaning of the new terms has not been adequately spelled out by the Secretary of State. The term "British subject", in use since Confederation, is to be replaced with the term "citizen of the Commonwealth." I am a long-time supporter of the Commonwealth concept. It is an admirable bridge between this country and the international community. The Commonwealth brings us together. It brings together nations of the world which have some traditions in common, but which otherwise live according to different precepts. The change, speaking in terms of semantics, is attractive. But we do not see defined what, in essence, this change will mean.

The term "British subject" is of long standing, and has been tested with experience. For instance, many Canadian citizens have travelled all over the world and used the diplomatic services and facilities of United Kingdom offices, or of other Commonwealth countries. What is to be the definition of "citizen of the Commonwealth?" Was the term introduced merely to avert the criticism of those who

come from other than Commonwealth countries and cannot be identified as British subjects, or will the term be given the same meaning and importance as is given now to "British subject"? The Secretary of State has not told us.

One hopes that an attempt is being made at the Commonwealth Office in London to gain some degree of acceptance for the term which will apply to Canadian citizens. Designating ourselves as citizens of the Commonwealth will be cheap and misleading unless we are prepared to give some enhanced meaning to the term. Obviously the Secretary of State owes us an explanation.

In the few minutes remaining I wish to deal with perhaps the most controversial part of the bill, that part reducing the residency requirement for citizenship from five years to three. When the minister spoke on second reading in May this year, he said he was surprised at the controversy his proposal had created. I am surprised he was surprised. Anything less than great interest in this proposal could be signified as a passive acceptance on the part of Canadians about our methods of granting Canadian citizenship.

Many of us have not taken seriously this business of how citizenship in this country is granted. The minister suggested that the bill will make it easier for immigrants to obtain citizenship after three years. They will not need to wait five years. But there is to be another change. The spouses of Canadian citizens who could, under certain conditions, obtain Canadian citizenship after one year must now wait for three years.

The minister suggested that the changes in the bill relate to the increased mobility of members of our society. I remind the minister that we are dealing with something basic. Already hundreds of thousands of immigrants to this country have acquired Canadian citizenship under the old system. We must realize that the question of changing residency to three years from five is one that is fraught with emotion, emotion with which many would prefer not to deal at all. Obviously a man's relationship to his country is basic.

The immigration committee held hearings for several months and occasionally had a chance to ask witnesses what they felt about this proposal. I must report that most witnesses appearing before the committee favoured the reduction in the residency requirement from five years to three. Perhaps the matter was best put by Mr. Wall, vice-president of the Royal Canadian Legion in St. John's, Newfoundland. He saw nothing wrong in reducing the period from five years to three, and said:

I do not think there is any argument on it. I would not particularly care if it was reduced to one year, provided that the person who is applying for citizenship has proved to be a person who would be of benefit to Canada. I think this is the whole criterion of citizenship in immigration policy. It is not? If they can contribute to Canada, welcome them in with open arms.

Those comments by a representative of the Royal Canadian Legion show that some Canadians do not think you can define citizenship merely in terms of some time requirement for eligibility. After all, it could take a lifetime or more for a person to be fully aware of his responsibilities and privileges as a citizen of this country. Professor Head, of York University, said to us that he thought five years is too long, that the waiting period would be