

*Canada Elections Act*

whether we are not exaggerating when we speak of vested rights for the benefit of British subjects.

Rather, I think that it is not a question of right but a privilege granted to British subjects, allowing them to vote in Canada, and that if the Parliament of Canada were to revoke this privilege, it would not be a violation of an individual's right, but nothing more than the Canadian government wanting to introduce a legislation better adapted to the Canadian reality and the requirements of a specifically Canadian citizenship.

One of my colleagues mentioned besides that the voting right or privilege had been withdrawn in some countries, in India for instance. There are also other Commonwealth countries, I think, who deprived British subjects of voting privileges.

In any event, I wish to indicate to my colleagues that despite the existence of a reciprocal right in some countries, those are the facts: Canadian immigration in those Commonwealth countries is much lower than that of citizens of Great Britain or other countries in Canada.

• (5:30 p.m.)

That, of course, works against us, Canadians, but it works in favour of the immigrants from those countries.

Fourth, I should like to say that subclause (3) seems very difficult to apply and extremely awkward. In fact, at the time of general elections, there will be two kinds of British subjects, namely: those who have qualified as voters before June 25, 1968, and those who arrived in Canada after that date.

Now, it may happen that in the same family, the father, the mother and two children are allowed to vote, because they have qualified as voters before June 25, while some other children in the family might not be allowed to do so, because on June 25, 1968 they had not yet qualified as voters.

So, you see what difficulties the enumerators will encounter when visiting certain homes to set up the voters list.

To my mind, instead of trying to pass a watered down act, as suggested by the member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Deachman), we must settle the question once and for all and have the courage to say: We recognize in the right to vote as sacred and priceless right to which only Canadians are entitled in this country.

[Mr. Ouellet.]

I will be extremely disappointed if the proposal put forward by my colleague for Matane (Mr. De Bané) is defeated. It is up to us to make decisions on bills. It is not up to us to take the necessary steps to facilitate the application of this type of legislation to a special group, and to spare certain feelings.

I feel the proposal of the member for Vancouver-Quadra applies to all immigrants, whether British subjects or not, since, after five years, an immigrant can apply for Canadian citizenship and I am under the impression that it is running with the hare and hunting with the hounds rather than settling the matter once and for all, as the hon. member for Matane has suggested.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I will allow myself a short reference to the remarks by the hon. member for Brandon Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), who made an undoubtedly generous and very worthy suggestion. I do not believe that granting the right to vote to the French people living in Canada would be a way of solving the problem. We should try in Canada to legislate for Canadians. We may have pleasant memories and an infinite gratitude for those we usually call "the people from our two mother countries" but I believe the deepest and growing yearnings of most Canadians are the following: We want to live in a really distinctive country, in a country having no ties with other countries, whatever the origin of its citizens. Let's legislate for the good of the Canadian people.

[English]

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Mr. Chairman, it is going to be an interesting process stating one's preferences over several amendments with which we are not formally seized. I think this debate has gone into some pretty fundamental fields. I do not get the feeling that we are actually discussing colonialism, as the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce seemed to suggest. That is not in my mind at the moment, nor do I think there is anyone here, as we grapple with this very difficult problem, who holds any belief other than that Canadian citizenship is a proud and cherished right. But we are dealing with a problem that was not of our making, but one which, as legislators in 1970, we have inherited.

As hon. members know it was a long, long time in this country before we had any such creature as a Canadian citizen. Indeed, the country was 70 years of age before we had a Citizenship Act. While it is all right to say that when people come to a jurisdiction they