

*Canada Elections Act*

I sincerely believe that all Canadian citizens must be treated as equals whatever their ethnic origin.

I would like to point out to the member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) of Prince Edward Island, my excellent friend and travelling companion, that the province of Prince Edward Island saw fit to revoke this privilege as early as 1954 and that the province of Quebec did so in 1945. What is good for two provinces should certainly be good for all Canada in 1970.

I do not share the views of the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard): only one year's residence in Canada to have the right to vote does not seem enough to me. Incidentally, there is a bill in my name on today's order paper aimed at reducing to three years the time of residence for any immigrant wishing to become a Canadian citizen. The measure also provides that Canadian citizenship be compulsory for all immigrants.

● (11:10 a.m.)

I recognize the need for granting British citizens, who have enjoyed some privileges up to now, some time to conform to these new rules, if the amendment from the hon. member for Matane is agreed to and put into effect before the next general election. Until then, on the occasion of a by-election, we should maintain the *status quo*, and in this way British subjects who are not yet Canadian citizens would still be able to exercise their franchise before they become Canadian citizens, because I presume that at least two years will elapse before the next general election is held. We will even suggest to the minister responsible for Canadian citizenship to accelerate and facilitate the process in order to help the many British subjects who have not yet deemed it appropriate to apply for Canadian citizenship.

Obviously, I cannot approve of the comments of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), our excellent friend, asking that the same privilege granted to British subjects be extended to citizens of French origin.

At this stage, I believe it is only fair to point out that we, of French origin, have never claimed special privileges, because we are one of the two founding races of Canada. Actually, during the debate on the Canadian flag, it had been suggested that a fleur-de-lis appear on that flag, in order to recall the past of citizens of French origin, which we could not accept. We have a country which is called

[Mr. Prud'homme.]

Canada, which is a distinct country and has no need for any symbol to link it with the past. We would rather live for the future.

I think therefore that we cannot agree with the suggestion of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris who, guided by a generous impulse, felt that citizens of French origin should be granted the same treatment enjoyed by British subjects.

I agree with my colleagues the members for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Papineau (Messrs. Allmand and Ouellet), whose remarks have been discussed, that there would be enormous difficulties in carrying out the enumeration for the next general election.

The amendment moved by our colleague the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Deachman) also seems to be unacceptable as, to my mind, a principle has to be either accepted or rejected. It is not logical to say: Some changes are in order, but let us extend the privilege for one or two years longer. Either we accept the *status quo*, or in a reasonable way we decide to make the necessary changes at the present time and perhaps complete them later on when the minister responsible for citizenship introduces in the House his bill on Canadian citizenship. Then citizenship would be brought more in line with the wishes expressed here today. If the bill is adopted as drafted, it will create two kinds of British subjects. And let us try to visualize the resulting difficulties for enumerators who visit all homes and will have to ask the residents: "Where you a British subject, as your name is Wilson, or Stanfield, or any other? Were you a resident of Canada before June 25, 1968?" As some of my colleagues have pointed out, some who were not 21 years old at that time will have to abide by the new act, whereas those who were Canadian residents before June 25, 1968 will continue enjoying the same privilege.

One can readily imagine how frustrated, and angry all citizens of British origin will be when, upon being asked by enumerators whether they are British subjects, they have to reply that they were residents before June 25, 1968 but that their son was not.

It is frustrating for citizens not of British origin to be asked: Would you please produce your citizenship certificate if you want to be on the list, because your name is "Prudhomme-ski", "Prudhommian" or of any other possible origin.

Mr. Chairman, I appeal to my colleagues, and I repeat, before concluding my remarks, that if I detected the slightest hint of anti-