

Canada Weekly

Volume 3, No. 27

July 2, 1975



Ottawa, Canada.

New Citizenship Act – a more equitable piece of legislation, 1

Canadian skaters at this year's international competitions, 3

External Affairs Minister visits Republic of Korea, 4

Film Board wins five awards at U.S. film festival, 4

Satellite symphony, 4

Forestry tire, world's largest, 4

Canadian travellers still spending more, 4

Contribution to UNRWA, 4

President of Indonesia visits, 5

Canadian participation continues in Cyprus Emergency Force, 5

Retail sales booming, 5

Grain substitute sought for feeding beef cattle, 5

Amended Farm Credit Act encourages young farmers, 5

Olympic flame 'electrified', 6

Aircraft gas station – over North Pole, 6

International trade fairs, 6

Towards diplomatic relations with Mozambique, 6

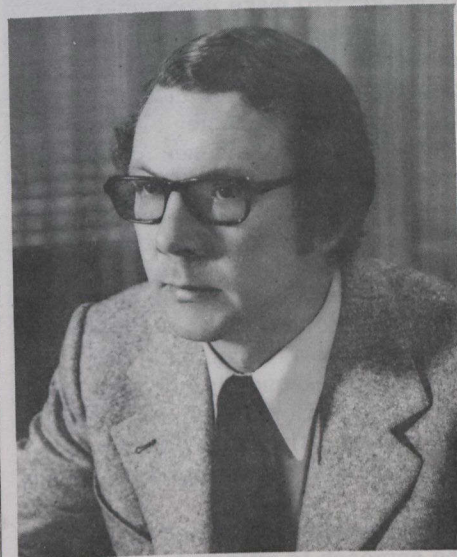
New Citizenship Act – a more equitable piece of legislation

In moving the second reading of Bill C-20, respecting citizenship, Secretary of State J. Hugh Faulkner recently explained to the House of Commons various proposed changes to the existing Citizenship Act, which has been in force since 1947. The following are his remarks regarding British subjects and several measures which, he said, "would make Bill C-20 a more liberal piece of legislation than the current Citizenship Act":

...Under the present act, a British subject wishing to become a Canadian citizen has a much simpler road to follow than does an ordinary alien. He is not questioned on his knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. He is not tested on his knowledge of the English or French language. No interview is conducted to determine his character. He does not appear before a judge to take the oath of allegiance unless he himself requests it. Normally, he simply takes the oath before an examiner at the time of application.

Since one of the main reasons for drafting a new Citizenship bill is to give this country citizenship legislation that is firmly based on principles of fairness, the preferential treatment of one group of potential citizens over another is no longer acceptable. For this reason, the privileged status formerly granted to British subjects has not been maintained in the new bill. British subjects will now be treated like other applicants.

Another point with regard to British subjects is the removal from the new bill of the phrase which appears in the present act "a Canadian citizen is a British subject". There are those who think that the removal of this phrase will mean that Canadians travelling abroad will no longer have the protection of British legations. This is not the case, Mr. Speaker. Canadian citizens now receive the protection of the British legation where no Canadian mission exists because the Canadian Government has made arrangements with the United Kingdom for such services to be provided to Canadian citizens. Such services in no way depend on the fact that Canadian citizens are termed British subjects under the present Citizenship Act.



Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner

The phrase "a Canadian citizen is a British subject" was, in reality, a transitional one. Before 1947, every resident of a country that was part of the British Empire, or latterly, of the British Commonwealth, was designated a British subject. The Citizenship Act of 1947 was the first law passed in any Commonwealth country to create a citizenship separate from that of British subject. The old phrase "British subject" was kept on, as I said, transitionally. Since then, distinct citizenship has been adopted by most Commonwealth countries, including the United Kingdom itself.

Commonwealth citizen

What we are proposing now is to add a phrase to our citizenship law which recognizes today's realities. In the new bill we have recognized the status of "citizen of the Commonwealth". In so doing, we acknowledge the ties of friendship that exist between Canada and all members of the British Commonwealth, not all of whom can any