

*Canada Elections Act*

an citizens and thus becoming eligible to vote. If we were to enlarge the franchise to include everyone, Canadian citizen or otherwise, who has been in the country for one year, it would be a more generous action than that proposed by the amendment before us.

We should tie in with this provision the proposition that those individuals who do not take Canadian citizenship when they are eligible for it would lose the franchise. Something along this line would be far more acceptable and in the spirit of the relationship between Parliament and the people who pay the taxes.

**Mr. Stewart (Cochrane):** Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to say a few words because I am very much in favour of the amendment. It is precisely the amendment that I proposed in a private member's bill, as did a few other members in this Parliament. I believe this is a very simple question and, frankly, I cannot understand anyone who would downgrade Canadian citizenship. Either a person is proud of being a Canadian or he is not, and if he is not interested in becoming a citizen, then I cannot understand why he would want to vote.

I am very surprised that my good friend the member for Hillsborough would mention reciprocity. I do not think he would vote in the election tomorrow if he were living in the United Kingdom. I cannot understand any Canadian who would vote in that election unless he wanted to be part of that country. I cannot understand, either, why anyone would want to run for Parliament in the United Kingdom unless he wanted to live there and become a British citizen. Conversely, I cannot understand why anyone from the British Isles or elsewhere in the Commonwealth, who does not want to become a citizen of this country, should have the right to vote here or to be a candidate in an election. It is as simple as that to me, and I would urge members of the House to vote in favour of striking that particular portion from the bill before us.

I am a little surprised that the committee would come up with this particular suggestion. I would be more in favour of the proposal of the hon. member for Skeena than what is before us in this bill. A British subject who was here in 1967 has had plenty of opportunity to become a Canadian citizen, more so than someone who has only been here a year prior to an election and may desire citizenship. From that point of view, I certainly agree

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

with the hon. member for Skeena far more than with this bill that is now before us. I say that people who have been in Canada and who have had the privilege of voting before becoming Canadian citizens, should never have had it. It was a mistake and we should remedy that mistake in this bill. If they are interested in casting their ballot, they have the next two or three years in which to take out citizenship. If they are not interested in becoming Canadians, there is no reason in the world why they should want to vote or be a candidate in an election. I think it is a great thing to be a Canadian citizen and it seems to me that these people should feel that way too.

• (4:40 p.m.)

I wonder how many members have discussed this matter with people from other countries. I have discussed it with members of the diplomatic corp who could not understand why anyone would want to vote in this country unless he were a citizen. It seems to me this illustrates the peculiar way of thinking we have in Canada when it comes to things like patriotism and love of country. This idea of wanting to be part of something else and hanging on to apron strings is an idea which I am very much against. I believe that if we are to be the kind of nation we wish to be, we should be proud of being Canadians and should consider Canadian citizenship as something very special. It should be a great privilege for someone to vote. If we consider it in that light, there is no reason why anyone who wishes to live here, even though he may be a British subject, should not want to be part of this country and a citizen of this country. If a man does not want that, he should not have the rights that go with citizenship. I encourage every hon. member to vote in favour of this amendment to strike out that particular paragraph which makes an exception in favour of the British citizen.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Laprise:** Mr. Chairman, I support the amendment of the hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané), as well as the remarks of the hon. member or Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) and of others to the effect that non Canadians should not be given the franchise.

I myself introduced a bill to that effect twice in the House and I should like to see clause 14(3) deleted, so that the franchise be given only to true Canadian citizens.