

*Citizenship*

nationhood, and it has often been remarked that since then they have been trying to prevent revolutions with the same objectives in other parts of the world. It seems to me that when we consider this legislation we have to consider it in the light of other legislation in this country, particularly that which pertains to immigration.

Some of the changes proposed in the legislation seem to be an attempt by the government to make up to new Canadians, to give them something they did not have before, but there is a restrictive side to it that I prophesy will have the effect of preventing people coming to this country more than is presently the case. An attitude seems, therefore, to be developing that while most of use are now in Canada through the process of immigration ourselves or by our forefathers, in future we will tend to limit immigration to our shores.

One of the provisions of the bill would reduce the period of qualification for citizenship from five years to three years. Let us face it, Mr. Speaker, this is an arbitrary decision; it is difficult to say that either period is appropriate. I would suggest that the only purpose of this bill is the political motivation of the government, which is receiving a considerable amount of representation from people newly arrived in the country who have families in other parts of the world and want them here. To a great degree these people are unhappy about some of the legislative plans of the government. Instead of this questionably magnanimous gesture reducing the qualification period, the government would be well advised to consider its over-all policy, and to be frank with the people of Canada about its intentions in regard to new Canadians.

In light of the green paper on immigration it seems to me that we must expect a restrictive type of regulation. Also, there have been recent developments in the area of multiculturalism vis-à-vis newly arrived persons in our country. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) of late has gone around the country indicating that the government is taking new and different directions in regard to the multiculturalism program. He wishes to change the policy to provide for more emphasis on anti-discrimination and communicating understanding. This indicates that the government has been under some pressure from people who have just come to Canada about the problems of discrimination and lack of understanding that they face.

This reduction of the qualification period from five years to three, and the unusual step of allowing a portion of the time spent in Canada illegally to be counted as part of the total time required for citizenship, seem to be gestures made for the purpose of ingratiating the government with people newly arrived.

Some interpretations of the provisions indicate that half of the total time a person is in the country illegally will count toward the citizenship requirement, but really the clause that deals with this is rather convoluted. As I read clause 5, a maximum of one year is to be allowed in the computation for citizenship. Be that as it may, I think we must hear something more from the minister about the government's motive for this rather novel proposition. If it thinks three years is appropriate then it should explain to us the necessity to have the illegal residence in Canada counted toward the requirement of citizenship. Sometimes people come into the country illegally through desperation,

and indeed in some cases it is possibly the only way they could come. I think I understand the background in many such cases, and perhaps relief should be given to them sometimes. It strikes me that this is a rather peculiar provision to have in statute form, and that the government could find other measures to deal with the situation.

**An hon. Member:** Like what?

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Well, under the Immigration Act there is a discretion given to the minister to give dispensation to illegal immigrants on a number of bases, and it seems to me that this discretion could be exercised in deserving cases. For example, the period of illegal residence could be taken into consideration in granting landed immigrant status at the earliest possible time in cases of need. But when the statute enshrines the principle that a portion of illegal residence is to be counted toward the period of acquired residence for citizenship, this is a sufficiently novel proposition that I should like to hear from the minister—

• (2130)

**Mr. Faulkner:** Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member permit a question? Does he suggest that, in the case of a student who is in this country under a student's visa and studies here, say, for four or five years, that we should not include some of his time in this country as coming within the three year provision? That, really, is at stake in this clause, not the sort of illegality to which the hon. member referred.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, obviously this is a matter of interpretation. The minister may interpret the clause as he pleases and suggest that it refers to students, and so on. My reading of the clause—and I shall be interested to hear the minister's interpretation and the interpretation of his legal advisers—suggests that its application is far broader and that it is not limited exclusively to students, as the minister seems to indicate. If the intent of the clause is as the minister suggests, why does he not put it in explicit terms, instead of in general terms which lend themselves to misinterpretation? Why does he not say that the clause is restricted to students?

I said I would keep my presentation brief on some aspects of the bill. I hope the minister will answer some questions in committee. At the same time I compliment the minister, just to show that I am not against all the provisions of the bill, as obviously some of its provisions meet with our approval and consent, and deserve our support. This being International Women's Year it is only fit and proper that we should provide equality of treatment for women.

I am glad to note that the status of wives will not necessarily depend on the nationality or fate of their spouses. This is an appropriate forward step, especially in International Women's Year. I suggest that the minister should confer with the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras), in order to discuss a similar provision whereby a woman may apply for landed immigrant status in some reasonable cases without being bound by the intentions of her husband in this regard. We ought to examine the law in this area, and make sure it is consistent. God knows, it is little use asking the government to be consistent. Nevertheless it ought to be consistent in the areas of immigration and citizenship, which are closely related and intertwined.

[Mr. Hnatyshyn.]