

Mr. REID: May I bring to the minister's attention a situation which still confronts those from Great Britain who are living in Canada, and will confront them after this bill passes. At the present time there are in this country well over one million persons who were born in the British isles. If they want to go across the line the United States immigration officer asks them where they were born. If they say, "Canada", they are passed through. If they say "Great Britain" they are stopped. They are looked upon as British subjects. After the bill passes, people from the British isles will receive, I believe, a certificate if they ask for it, just the same as others will. Therefore we shall have an anomaly there. Let us suppose that two people are going across the line. One has a certificate and the other has not. Then they may visit the old country. On the way back they will be challenged coming in. It will probably be no good for them to say: "I was in Canada long before the new bill went through." They will probably have to show their birth certificate and the date of entry even though they have been out of Canada for only one year.

Mr. COLDWELL: A passport would settle that so far as coming in is concerned.

Mr. REID: They may not require a passport after the severe regulations are done away with, because prior to the war one could visit the old country without a passport. That condition may prevail again when this bill is passed. I am going to suggest to the minister—and I should like his comment—that a certificate be given to all those who came here from the British isles prior to the bill being passed. I know that to-day anyone on the continent of Europe who could show a Canadian citizenship paper would be looked upon as having something equal to a passage to heaven. That is how precious anything Canadian would seem in the eyes of those on the continent. I ask the minister to give serious consideration to the granting of a certificate to the million or more Britishers who are in this country, and who were here prior to the passage of the bill.

Mr. MARTIN: I am grateful to the hon. member for raising that point, because it affords me an opportunity to give some information on that, and perhaps I can do it now. I wrote a letter to-day to a prominent citizen of this country who is in exactly the class that my hon. friend mentions. Under the bill all British subjects domiciled in Canada will, upon the passage of this bill, become Canadian citizens. The question is asked, what provision

is made for giving them certificates so that they can avoid the sometimes humiliating situations in which they find themselves? Perhaps at this point I might answer an inquiry that has been raised in the newspapers as to how a British person who has already been in Canada for five years or more would acquire a certificate if he wanted to get one. Such a person who has been here for five years or more would be a Canadian citizen automatically as soon as the bill comes into force. No naturalization procedure, nor any certificate will be necessary. However, many of these people will undoubtedly want to get certificates simply to have them as a matter of proof, and the bill provides for such situations.

Under section 11 (a) of the bill a certificate can be issued to quiet any doubt as to whether a person has the status of Canadian citizen. This does not require the whole naturalization procedure to be gone through all over again if the minister is satisfied that the person's claim is valid. In addition, under section 39 (i) regulations may be made as to "the manner of proof of Canadian citizenship and the granting of special certificates for such purpose". Under these regulations provision will certainly be made for British subjects who have become Canadian citizens without getting certificates but who later wish to acquire them.

Mr. HAZEN: Will the minister place on record the contents of the cables that were sent to other members of the British Commonwealth with regard to the provisions of this bill, or the reasons why he should not do so?

Mr. MARTIN: So far as I am personally concerned there is no objection, but the hon. gentleman knows that these are privileged documents. Consent of the other parties will have to be obtained. I shall make inquiries at once as to whether that consent is available from the other parties. If so, I see no reason for not tabling them.

Mr. COLDWELL: I have just one question. This afternoon the point was raised by an hon. member as to what the status of a citizen of Eire is in connection with the commonwealth at this time, and in particular with regard to this bill. That question has not been answered; it is an interesting one.

Mr. MARTIN: Does the hon. gentleman wish to deal with that now or when we come to the appropriate section?

Mr. COLDWELL: I do not mind.