

*Canada Elections Act*

from the British Commonwealth or from France? Why cannot any landed immigrant, once he is resident in Canada for 12 months, cast his ballot? If he has not taken out his citizenship within the five-year period, he would lose his franchise? It seems to me to be going the whole route of eligibility to vote in a federal election. My own personal preference is for the concept of the hon. member for Skeena. I also have sympathy for the concept espoused by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. If the principle put forward by the hon. member for Skeena is not accepted and the principle contained in the bill is left as it is, I will want to move my amendment at the appropriate time to ensure that the legislation is not retroactive in its effect but the restrictions therein would not take effect until the proclamation of this bill.

I cannot support the amendment of the hon. member for Matane because it is even more restrictive than the retroactive principle contained in the bill. I hope the committee will accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Skeena, unless by some miracle we are able to come up with something with which most, if not all, would agree.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Chairman, at first I would like to say that I am in favour of deleting clause 14 (3) and this for four reasons. Firstly, I regard it as discriminatory. Secondly, I regard it as negative. Thirdly, in a certain sense I regard it as too generous. Fourthly, I regard it quite simply as impossible to apply and quite embarrassing.

I think Parliament should pass fairer acts which would assure equality to everyone. However it seems to me that subclause (3) is really discriminatory and favours one group over the others.

I suggest that subclause (3) smells of discrimination. Such preferential treatment is to be rejected and should not, most of all, be perpetuated by Parliament. It is all the more discriminatory since the standing committee which has looked into this matter was forced to compromise.

The simple fact that the committee has recommended to set a time limit to the exercise of that privilege is the very proof that there is discrimination and that more and more Canadians, and more and more members of Parliament especially, want to put an end to it.

Here is a second reason why the amendment should be turned down: it is completely

negative. Indeed, it does not encourage, by any means, the people affected by those clauses to become Canadian citizens.

Is it necessary to remind the House, Mr. Chairman, that there are in the neighborhood of one million and a half British subjects in Canada?

Many of them have been living here for several years. It may be because our laws allowed them to live here as privileged citizens that they did not take the trouble to become Canadian citizens.

In my opinion, we are doing all of us a disservice by perpetuating such a situation under to subclause (3) of clause 14. On the contrary, I think it should be kept in mind that a legislation on citizenship will very shortly be introduced in Parliament, and that it will most likely tend to reduce many of the privileges granted to certain groups of immigrants.

I will now refer to the remarks made yesterday by my colleague for Skeena (Mr. Howard), who said that we do, and I quote:

—discriminate against the male sex in favour of the female sex. Normally a person must wait five years before applying for Canadian citizenship, but if a woman who has emigrated to Canada marries a Canadian citizen, she has only to wait one year before she can apply for Canadian citizenship.

It is obvious that when the government introduces its citizenship bill, it will try to eliminate those anomalies. To me there is no excuse for waiting several months pending the introduction of the citizenship bill, before correcting the situation.

Coming back to the remarks of the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), I would say, contrary to what he claimed, that we should use the handicaps afflicting some immigrants more than others in Canada as an incentive for taking every opportunity to make everybody equal before the law.

I consider that this clause is negative and that it should be deleted. I also think it is too generous. Several times, members have pointed out that a British subject settled in Canada, who would go to another Commonwealth country to live, could avail himself of his right to vote in that country.

First of all, there is a correction to be made. True, this right exists in certain Commonwealth countries, but it has been revoked in others.

I have been using the word "right" for the past few minutes and I am just wondering