

Mr. MacNICOL: Then what does the amendment imply?

Mr. MARTIN: The hon. gentleman has approached this question very constructively, and I will explain it again. First of all this bill does not change one iota the rights which British subjects have enjoyed in this country for more than twenty-seven years. That is the first point. The amendment I have introduced will simply mean that a British subject applying for a certificate of citizenship, that is documentary proof of his status for use abroad or elsewhere, will not have to go before a court to obtain that certificate except in such cases as the department may want to refer to the courts, such doubtful cases as may arise from time to time. The hon. gentleman will appreciate that many British subjects come to this country who were not necessarily born in the old country. Many come from elsewhere, such as British Honduras and so on, and it is necessary and desirable, as my hon. friend and all hon. members will recognize, that such cases should be gone into; but such cases are the exception.

Mr. MacNICOL: Suppose an immigrant from the old country, remains here for a year or two and then desires to visit the old country again, with the intention of returning to Canada. Does he have to be registered in Canada as a citizen before he can get his passport?

Mr. MARTIN: He would not get a Canadian passport at that point. He would have a British subject passport.

Mr. MacNICOL: And he could go back and forth?

Mr. MARTIN: Yes.

Mr. MacNICOL: But if he wanted to go away as a Canadian citizen he would have to be registered as such, and he could not do that until the expiration of five years?

Mr. MARTIN: That is right.

Mr. MacNICOL: When the minister was speaking I hoped he would go a step farther, because I do not see any difference between the position of a British subject as outlined in this bill and the position as it existed when the Minister of Mines and Resources came here. It remains the very same. What would be the advantage to the Minister of Mines and Resources, if he were to come here now, in taking out his Canadian papers at all?

Mr. MARTIN: There would be every advantage in the world. As I pointed out in my statement on second reading, and perhaps in my reply, thousands of persons come here

[Mr. Martin.]

from various parts of the commonwealth and remain for many years, but with no documentary proof whatever as to their status. As an example of what I had in mind I mentioned the daughter of a missionary in China. This gentleman was himself a Canadian citizen. He had been born in Scotland and had lived in Canada for some eight years. He was a well known clergyman in the city of Toronto, and I have no doubt is well known to the hon. member. His daughter had never lived in Canada. Under the laws of China she was a citizen of that country. Under the laws of Canada she would have been entitled to entry here like anyone else. She went to the United States to study and was taken off the train in the middle of the night with no means of proving her national status. When this bill is passed we shall be able to give her a certificate, but at present we cannot do so.

Living at the border as I do I have had not only departmental but personal experience of cases involving British subjects who lived in Canada for a long time and then went to the United States. For some reason or other they have been deported from the United States. In one case I have in mind the deportation occurred after the person had been in Canada for seventeen years. He developed a disease which made him inadmissible under the Immigration Act, and he was deported to the old country, where he had not been for something like forty-eight years. He had no documentary proof whatsoever of his status. We have business men who were born in the old country, who have come here and become part of our life, and who are then engaged to work in foreign countries. Right now in the department we have a case of a man who was born in Wales, lived in this country for about fifteen years, voted here like anyone else, and became part of the Canadian community. Under the laws of a particular South American country, because he has no documentary proof of his national status—and he has none—he is not able to stay there. One could go on giving case after case. My deputy is in front of me, and I think I can say that in our department I know of over 3,800 such cases that have occurred since 1925. In the interests of justice as well as of personal convenience it is highly desirable that these people should have documentary proof of their status, and they will now get it.

Mr. MacNICOL: I supported that principle of the bill from the time I first read it. I think it is quite right and quite in order that Canadians should have documentary proof. I was just going to say to the com-