

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 22, 1970

The House met at 11 a.m.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

MEASURE TO CONSOLIDATE AND REVISE

The House resumed from Wednesday, June 17 consideration in committee of Bill C-215, respecting the franchise of electors and the election of members to the House of Commons—Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):—Mr. Béchard in the Chair.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. When the committee adjourned on Wednesday, June 17, 1970, it was considering subclause (3) of clause 14 as well as the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Matane. Before resuming the debate, could I point out that subclause (8) of clause 13 has been allowed to stand. The committee is now considering subclause (3) of clause 14, at page 24 of the bill. The motion presented by the hon. member for Matane is now before the House and reads as follows:

That subclause (3) of clause 14 be struck out.

On subclause (3) of clause 14—*Certain British subjects deemed electors.*

[English]

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Chairman, perhaps it might be of some assistance to the committee if I tried to summarize the state of proceedings at the present time. By agreement we had a further discussion on Wednesday last when this particular clause was under consideration, and there were at least five proposals which were set before the committee at that time for consideration.

There was, of course, the first of the five proposals, the amendment actually before the committee, that is to say, the amendment by my colleague, the hon. member for Matane, which would remove altogether from British subjects other than Canadian citizens the right to vote in federal elections.

A second alternative was proposed by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, which

would continue the voting arrangement as it exists under the Canada Elections Act in favour of British subjects for a further period of five years, during which period of time they could exercise the option of taking out Canadian citizenship, thereby becoming qualified as Canadian citizens, but the right to vote as British subjects would end at the end of the five-year period. There was a modification of that suggested by the hon. member for Ontario to change the term "British subjects" in the Act to "persons."

Then there was the proposal of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris that the provision that exists in the Elections Act as it now reads, that is to say, any British subject who has been continuously resident in Canada for a period of one year, would continue in favour of British subjects but it would also be extended to citizens of France.

Finally, there was the proposal of the hon. member for York-Sunbury which, as I understand it, would continue the existing provisions in the Elections Act of special advantage to British subjects only who have been continuously resident in Canada for a period of 12 months. So we have a spectrum of choices. In addition, there was the recommendation by the committee which has been adopted in the draft bill, that is to say, that the right to vote would continue for any British subject who had that right in the last general federal election provided he remained continuously resident in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Chairman, I myself intended to move an amendment identical to the one proposed by the hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané) on June 16, 1970. I find it a logical amendment because its adoption would make all citizens equal in Canada, whether they are called "Prud'homme", "Prudhomson", or "Prudhomski".

Moreover, I wish to say that I would reject the amendment if I detected any anti-British feelings in it.

To avoid repetitions, I make mine the comments the hon. member for Matane made last Tuesday when he introduced his amendment and in his brilliant speech of June 17.