

in the past, or will the government see the error of its ways and allow the bill to be considered by the committee unhampered by this kind of manoeuvring? Will the committee be allowed to obtain information from witnesses, from ministers, and from interested parties in all segments of society on this important subject?

I cannot understand the urgency of reducing this waiting period for citizenship from five years to three years, but I am prepared to be convinced that this should be done. If someone can present good arguments, and I believe some hon. members have some, I will certainly be prepared to listen to them. I have listened to those who have spoken so far and I have read many of the speeches, but I still feel we should maintain the five-year period.

After listening to the remarks of the minister the other day I felt there were circumstances in which the waiting period should be reduced. The minister referred to a student who had been here for a number of years studying in this country, and I think such a case would be valid in respect of reducing the time period. This is one of the things we should be allowed to consider.

I sincerely hope that when we get the bill to committee we will not witness political manoeuvring. I hope we will not see a great deal of movement on the government side toward the guillotine, forcing the committee to report back to the House by a specific date. The committee should be allowed full range to discuss all segments of the bill and to call witnesses. Perhaps it would be of value to call some of the citizenship judges from around this area, if that is convenient. They could come before the committee and give us the advantage of their experience.

That is about the sum and substance of what I have to say, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to see some parts of this bill. There are some positive steps suggested, and I commend the minister for bringing those suggestions forward. At the same time I have reservations about other clauses of the bill. It is important that we be allowed to examine this bill thoroughly and completely in the committee. If there are some particularly sensitive areas in respect of which we want discussion there is nothing to prohibit us from holding meetings in camera. Let us not gang the committee; let us allow the committee a full ranging and complete examination of this bill, with a full opportunity to express its views in its report back to the House so that this piece of legislation can be a credit to citizenship and something we can support.

**Mr. Len Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have the opportunity of making a few remarks on Bill C-20 as I think it is a very important bill, for which the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) should be commended.

I believe this is the third day on which we have dealt with Bill C-20 in the House of Commons. In view of that fact, and my feeling that there has been a great deal of discussion so far on this matter, I will limit my remarks to what I think are some of the highlights.

I hope it will not be too long before members on all sides of the House agree that this bill should go to the committee for the kind of careful study it deserves. It seems this is not a controversial bill, although there are several clauses about which some of my colleagues are concerned. Their

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concerns do not seem to be too serious. I hope we can get the bill into committee as soon as possible, hopefully by the end of this day.

● (1600)

The other night as I listened to my colleagues on the other side of the House, a number of my friends came around and asked me what I thought about citizenship and immigration. I said to some of them that I think it probably is just a little late to ask that question, and that probably they should have asked it of my ancestors. I think they had a tremendously generous immigration policy. It is perhaps a little late in a number of ways. One of my good friends in Kamloops, a former chief, said to me that as he looks across the river and sees that the white man is building a cement basement, he knows he intends to stay here a little while.

The bill before us does some very important things. It reflects the thinking of modern-day people living in a very fast moving world. A number of adjectives have been used to describe this particular bill. The hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) described it as progressive. It is a very progressive piece of legislation.

The act we have now came into force I believe on January 1, 1947. It has been amended in a number of minor ways since that time. I think that is quite a long period in which to have such an important piece of legislation on the books without serious amendments.

One of the characteristics of the present law that has bothered me for some time is that it clearly plays favourites. It gives rights to men that it does not give to women. British subjects seem to have a special status. They are favoured over immigrants to Canada from other countries. I am glad Bill C-20 corrects all these inequities in the present law.

I am particularly pleased about the clauses that give women equal status with men. Now when we have gone through the process of having the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, International Women's Year, and other important measures to give equality to women, we wonder how we could have been so dumb. Why did we not do many of these things a long time ago? Many of them are overdue. The report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women pointed out five ways in which the present act discriminates against women.

As the law now stands the alien wife of a Canadian citizen wishing to become a citizen here requires only one year of residence. The alien husband of a Canadian wife has to wait a full five years. Bill C-20 provides that the husband or wife of a Canadian citizen must only fulfil the standard residency requirement before becoming a citizen.

Women who had married an alien before 1947 lost their citizenship. Most of these people were not even aware that they were no longer classed as Canadians. Now when they apply for a passport they are told that they must first become Canadian citizens. It is easy to understand the consternation of these women who were born and raised in Canada and who have made their own contribution to this land when suddenly they find that this right has been taken from them. These revisions will also correct this injustice.