

Canada Elections Act

I am 100 per cent Canadian. I want a great Canada but a united Canada and we will succeed in this by passing the proposed amendment. As long as there are some who vote against such amendments, the unity of Canada will be impossible to achieve. We have come to the heart of the matter and listening to those who oppose this amendment—fortunately there are not very many—I was shocked about their approach to life in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Pringle: Mr. Speaker, as a member from British Columbia where we are very proud of our British tradition—

An hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: I can say that we are very thankful for the great pioneering struggles of the British people who came to our country and assisted in the development of that area.

We are also proud of the Spaniards, the San Juans who came up into the Strait of Juan de Fuca and helped by their efforts, and we are proud of the German Mennonite people who have taken up farming in our area and who have done such an excellent job. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would be the last person to say that we are anti any nationality. I would hope that at this time we might all forget the emotionalism which has been raised in the House today. I would hope that we might think in terms of the Canadian fact. I want to be pro-Canadian. I do not believe we have to be anti anything in order to be pro-Canadian.

• (12:50 p.m.)

It has been suggested that if this amendment is passed we shall be taking away a right. Frankly, I do not believe that. I have talked with a good number of British people in my area, principally about the change in the passport regulations. Some have been confused and some felt that it should not be necessary for them to become Canadian citizens. But I have yet to find one who has said that we are doing the wrong thing by insisting that people in Canada become Canadians. If we pass this amendment, we shall be helping some people to become Canadian citizens.

We change laws every day. We change speed limits. Is that taking away rights? We change regulations and amend laws and statutes to take away, in effect, certain rights of

[*Mr. Gauthier.*]

Canadians every day of the week and, hopefully, add rights which affect Canadians every day of the week. If that were not so there would be little use in the House of Commons sitting here day after day debating the issues of the day.

This amendment has nothing to do with unity. We are talking about Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: Does anyone here suggest that when we talk about Canadians we are going to create disunity among those people who are not Canadians? We are simply inviting those who are not Canadians to be proud enough of this country not only to live with us but to take out Canadian citizenship and help to govern this country. The amendment has nothing to do with preferred citizens. There cannot be preferred citizens. I do not think we have any and I do not know who they are. If it is alleged that there are preferred citizens in this country, then it is high time we made changes; nor should those changes consist merely of repealing certain parts of the Elections Act that confer special privileges on some.

If you were to walk down a street today and ask people about their nationality, I wonder how many would say to you that they are English, Scottish, French, German, Italian, and so on, or would they say, "I am a Canadian"? How many wish to be known as Canadians? It took many years before it was possible for Canadians to have Canadian citizenship. Some suggest that we are not doing the correct thing in this bill to demand that all voters be Canadians.

One could say much more about this amendment, but I feel that I must associate myself with the remarks of the proposer of the amendment. I support the hon. member for Matane as well as the hon. member for Saint-Denis in this matter. I feel confident that the British people in my constituency will accept the fact that they are being invited as British subjects to go a step farther and apply for Canadian citizenship. I believe that we need some patriotism in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: I believe we lack patriotism. What is the matter with going about the country and saying, "We are Canadians; we want Canadians to be patriotic"? We are