

It is obvious that no inquiring body, no police force, if you like, can check up and find in one year the necessary history of all those who have been criminals or have criminal tendencies. It may well be that at the ports our doctors miss some illnesses and diseases, and certainly time is required to make inquiries. What I am asking from the minister, in the spirit of compromise, is that, to use his own words, we continue what we have always had with the people from the different parts of the commonwealth; to permit them to formalize themselves with us as Canadian citizens at the end of one year.

I cannot understand why the suggestion is opposed. It is taking nothing from anybody, not a single thing. I am one of those who believe in no hyphens. Surely the association with countries speaking the same language, with similar institutions and so forth, would permit the minister and the government, and I hope all members of this house to say: "Yes, this we will do." Then indeed we can go out and say that we have done something for this country. Then indeed we can have pride in our citizenship. We can say: "Here is my certificate; I am a Canadian citizen."

Mr. GARDINER: I have not so far taken any part in this discussion, and I do not think I should do so now were it not that I should like to make a similar appeal to that which has just been made by the hon. member for Calgary West.

First of all I should like to say a word in reply to one suggestion made by the hon. member for Broadview, to the effect that we have no mandate to be discussing this question at the present time. At the beginning of last session, the first session following the last election, I made it plain that so far as I was concerned I had a mandate on this question. One who has a majority so small as mine can probably speak in terms of a mandate with much greater authority than one who has a larger majority. I am quite sure there were more than fourteen people in my constituency who voted for me on the understanding that I believed that a person born in Canada, or one who had lived in Canada for a certain period of time and had been naturalized, should be in a position to call himself a Canadian citizen and have legal authority for so doing. Therefore, on that point I think it will be agreed that I at least have a mandate to come before this committee and say that a bill of this kind ought to be passed.

I recall that when I made that statement on the address in reply to the speech from the throne at the last session, the remark was

more loudly applauded from all sides of the house than any other remark I have made in this house during the last two sessions.

The statement was made that when a person goes into court or anywhere else and is asked what country he is a citizen of, or what his nationality is, he ought to be in a position to say that he is a Canadian, and should not be compelled to go any farther in stating his nationality. That, I say, was applauded on all sides of the house; therefore I think we can all assume that we have a mandate to discuss this question at this particular time and to express our views on a bill of this kind. To me it is just as important as some of the other matters which were referred to by the hon. member for Broadview.

May I now come back to the point I had in mind, that of British citizenship or British subject. I have found it rather difficult to determine in my own mind—and I have not yet been convinced that it is correct—that any British subject had to be in this country a year before he became a Canadian. My understanding is a British subject has always been a Canadian on arrival in this country. He became a Canadian on the day he arrived. For that reason I cannot see any difference in principle between the amendment which says that a man should remain here a year, and the bill itself which says that a man should remain here for five years before he obtains a certificate. The principle is the same in both cases. It is simply a matter of time, and it does not affect his rights as a Canadian citizen. In order to emphasize that point may I read paragraph (c) of section 29 of the elections act:

29. Save as in this act otherwise provided, every person, male or female, shall be qualified to vote at the election of a member, who, not being an Indian ordinarily resident on an Indian reservation,

(c) has ordinarily resided in Canada for at least twelve months and in the electoral district wherein such person seeks to vote for at least two months immediately preceding the issue of the writ of election.

That applies to me as a native born Canadian just as much as it applies to a British subject born in Britain. If I go out of this country and remain away for two years or five years and then come back, I must reside in the constituency for the twelve months immediately preceding the election before I can vote.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Two months.

Mr. GARDINER: In Canada for twelve months and in the constituency for the two months immediately preceding the election.