

Citizenship

citizenship conditionally to the second generation, which is a step in the right direction.

The Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) is to be commended, I believe, for presenting so many just and liberal changes to our citizenship legislation, above all including the one which removes preferential treatment for some applicants. It is most laudable that this new bill is firmly based on the principles of fairness and equal treatment for all.

The new status of citizen of the commonwealth also updates the law and brings us into the real world, acknowledging the special ties that unite Canadians with all members of the British Commonwealth.

Waiting periods for application and for reapplication are being reduced, and this will be welcomed by many people. Although some people regard the reduction in the waiting period while resident in Canada from five to three years as too short for an immigrant to become acquainted with this country, the minister has emphasized the changing attitudes, the different circumstances, and the many other opportunities in Canada that enable potential citizens to make up their minds sooner and to commit themselves to Canada much earlier today if they want to do so. Some immigrants are ready for Canadian citizenship before others. If at the end of three years an applicant feels he is capable of satisfying the citizenship judge regarding language, knowledge of Canada, and other requirements under the act, then I do not see why the applicant should not apply for citizenship.

The bill also removes arbitrary discretion and redefines citizenship as a qualified right where certain conditions are met. In trying to correct arbitrary decisions this bill grants discretion to the governor in council to refuse citizenship if it would be prejudicial to the security of Canada or contrary to public order in Canada. I think this should answer many of the objectionable remarks which were made in the House this afternoon during this debate.

The changes in the bill which remove many inconsistencies and barriers should encourage more potential citizens to acquire Canadian citizenship without difficulty, and without having to wait too long.

At this point I should also like to make a few remarks about the citizenship courts and their judges. The new legislation will establish the title of "citizenship judge" for those people who administer the citizenship courts in our land. I am sure all members of the House appreciate the government's responsiveness to the needs of potential citizens by making citizenship courts more accessible, especially during evening hours and at week ends. This is an outreach program of the Secretary of State that is most commendable, and I wish to thank him for establishing citizenship courts at more than one centre in various cities in Canada. For example, in Toronto and Montreal citizenship offices are open in the evenings, and people are free to ask question about Canadian citizenship and to receive advice and encouragement.

However, the minister should not stop there. Citizenship courts should still be expanded and strengthened by the appointment of more judges. There is a great backlog of cases, especially in Toronto, and I believe that the sooner immigrants get their citizenship papers the happier they

[Mr. Haidasz.]

will be, and they will become good useful citizens in their new country.

The privileges of Canadian citizenship are many and worth while, and should make us both proud and grateful. In particular Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, which recognizes the cultural values of all Canadians in a country where no one group is superior to another, makes Canada's citizenship attractive and a most valuable acquisition. This policy and the new citizenship legislation not only helps build a Canadian identity, but also strengthens national unity. This is why, Mr. Speaker, I should like to applaud the enlightened attitude displayed by the Secretary of State in presenting the bill to the House, and I also commend the legislation to all members of the House.

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, in examining the bill and searching for words to express my reaction to it I am somewhat torn between the positive provisions in the bill and those which I would define as less positive. Let me deal with the positive ones first.

The provisions under Part I, giving the right of citizenship to the children of female Canadians in the same way as it is granted to the children of male Canadians, is essentially identical, at least in purpose, to the provisions in Bill C-275, a private member's bill brought in by myself this session which followed upon a private member's bill I brought in at each of the previous sessions. In fact I introduced this bill soon after being elected to the House of Commons.

Quite clearly the existing Citizenship Act, which discriminates against the children of Canadian mothers in this way, is unfair and unrealistic in terms of stated government policy and the attitudes and desires of Canadians. As one of my colleagues pointed out during the second reading debate last May, this provision follows on from the recommendation made by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

It was because of this discrimination that I was moved to bring in this private member's bill, but what really triggered it was a situation I became aware of which involved a personal friend of mine, a female Canadian citizen. I think her story is interesting in that it shows the effects that this sort of discrimination can have on Canadians.

Upon graduation from university she sought work with World University Services at the University of Santiago in Chile. While there she met and married a citizen of the Argentine. This citizen of the Argentine left his country—he was also a student at Santiago University—because of political differences with the existing regime. They shortly had a child, and upon the completion of his education they returned to Canada. The child was a citizen of Chile.

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After they returned to Canada the Allende government was elected and subsequently deposed, and for a great number of reasons it was not feasible for this family to make use of the facilities available to a Chilean citizen for their son. They could not get a passport. The father was a citizen of Argentina, which also had a change of administration, and he was persona non grata in his own country. Therefore it was not practical for this child to be registered