

*Citizenship*

town is called upon to inspect the property, to close up doors that have been broken into, repair windows and that sort of thing, yet it is powerless to take action.

Several hon. members who have spoken in this debate have referred to clause 5 of the bill. I think unfortunately this particular clause has either been misread or misinterpreted, because I gather from the remarks of some members that they are under the impression that if a person is in Canada illegally and he subsequently becomes a landed immigrant, half of the time he was here illegally counts towards citizenship. That just is not so. I think a clear reading of the clause indicates that the maximum time he can count toward citizenship is one year. It is unfortunate that so much emphasis has been put on this point. It is not entirely clear from the way the clause is written, and it could probably have been drafted a little better than it is. It could have been couched in clearer language with perhaps an explanatory side note, but that is not the case.

One aspect that exercises me about the question of citizenship is that it is not tied in with immigration. I think we all agree that we should go back to the old system where citizenship and immigration were in the same department. I do not think they should ever have been separated; the two are interlinked. Examination of the various speeches on this subject in the House invariably reveals that immigration is discussed along with citizenship.

I believe at one time the government had an immigration resettlement program. I do not know what happened to it, and I recognize there are difficulties in directing people where they can and cannot go. But at the present time tremendous pressure is being put on the larger municipalities, basically those in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver where the bulk of immigrants to Canada seem to settle. Tremendous pressure is put on housing requirements and services in the municipalities, as well as upon the educational system.

I was talking to the mayor of Toronto some months ago and he mentioned that something like 50 per cent of the children of immigrants going into the public school system for the first time had either a poor knowledge or no knowledge of English. I am not saying that is their fault, but we must bear in mind that the municipalities are trying to handle a problem that results from the federal government's immigration policy.

I am fortunate enough to have travelled rather extensively throughout the world. At the last count I had visited, I think, 35 different countries, some under totalitarian governments. I am always glad to get back to Canada, and I am very proud of my country and of my Canadian citizenship. While abroad I have been approached, as I am sure members on all sides of the House are when they travel abroad, by people who want to come to Canada. They ask how they can get to Canada, what I can do to get them here, and how they can become a Canadian citizen.

Looking at some of these people, Mr. Speaker, you cannot help but feel compassion for them. Some of them came in contact with missionaries from Canada when they were children; they were educated by missionaries, and on reaching adulthood found they were isolated from their own citizens in their own country. They see the advantages and privileges we have in this country, and there is a

[Mr. Kempling.]

desire on their part to come here. By and large we have a reputation for tolerance, for freedom, and for freedom of expression, and we certainly do not want to change that.

● (1550)

We must look carefully at this matter of citizenship. The suggestion of reducing the time from five years to three years is one that bothers me greatly, particularly when I look at what other countries are doing, and I think that is a proper thing to do. We see that Britain has a five-year waiting period; the United States has a five-year waiting period; France has a five-year waiting period; and in Belgium under some circumstances the waiting period is up to ten years; West Germany has shorter periods, but the shortest is five years; Sweden has a ten-year waiting period; New Zealand has a five-year waiting period for British subjects; and I believe Australia has a three-year period for British subjects, with a longer period of time for others. When we get the bill to the committee we should look very closely and carefully at what other countries are doing before reducing this to three years. Certainly this is one point that bothers many members on this side of the House.

I have had some objections, like the hon. member who spoke on the matter earlier, expressed by people who have come to Canada as immigrants and have obtained their citizenship after five years, or as they put it, they have earned their citizenship, and they feel somewhat hurt that now someone may possibly come to this country and meet all the criteria, and obtain citizenship in three years.

There are many points that we can discuss in respect of this bill, but the one thing that really concerns me is what will happen to the bill when it goes to the committee. We have seen a great deal of manoeuvring in committees since the last election and many of us are becoming concerned. On a number of occasions when we have attempted to take a vote which may have gone against the government, the government members have left the committee in order that there would not be a quorum. I think that is deplorable action on their part.

We have also seen quite a bit of manoeuvring by the steering committees. On occasion when the members of a steering committee have decided on a course of action for the committee, when the committee itself meets someone has moved a motion to set aside the recommendations of that steering committee, substituting another recommendation—in fact exercising a form of closure or guillotine on the committee by requiring it to report back to the House within a certain time period. There have been numerous occasions of this in the past several months.

What will happen if this sort of thing continues is that when bills return to the House they will be the subject of amendment after amendment after amendment. This will frustrate our procedures. The purpose of a committee, as I understand it, is to find the facts and make recommendations to the House. Committees are charged by the House of Commons with the responsibility of eliciting information, examining the legislation, and recommending a course of action. This is not what is happening.

There are so many important aspects of this bill I am wondering just what will happen when it reaches committee. Will it receive the same kind of treatment as other bills