

Canada Elections Act

• (12:40 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak on the amendment brought in by the hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané) in order to say that we support it because it is logical.

Various views are expressed in the House, especially by Anglo-Saxon members who are indulging in sentimentality and this is blameful.

In my opinion this amendment has but one purpose: to give justice to all Canadian citizens. In fact, I think that in reading today's *Hansard* the population will understand why we have so much difficulty in creating unity in Canada. I think that there lies the harm developed through the years by such discriminatory action.

Mr. Chairman, I love Canada and I think that the first intelligent move to be made by every citizen who earns a living in Canada and really loves his country should be to apply for Canadian citizenship. I was shocked to notice that some British subjects who have been living in Canada for 20 or 30 years and are even members of Parliament have not yet applied for Canadian citizenship, which is, in my opinion, scandalous. I am a Canadian citizen and I did apply for my citizenship card. As we are all Canadians, I should ask those who do not want to apply for Canadian citizenship to go back to the country they love so much because they lack logic and do not love Canada enough.

The amendment would allow only Canadians to vote. For example, in the United States, a certificate of American citizenship is required to vote.

The amendment now before us aims at restoring justice, which will lead to the unity everyone desires. The reason for the disagreement is the existence of discrimination.

A moment ago, a member said that if this amendment were adopted, it would give the impression that British subjects are superior to the others. It is true. It is not only an impression, it is true. They have always been considered superior to the others. Now, today, we want them to be treated as all the others so that we can all be "true Canadians".

I think this amendment will achieve that goal. Everybody wants it. The New Canadians want it. The previous speaker tried to put the blame partly on the province of Quebec by saying that especially the French Canadians want it. No, all honest and logical people, all

New Canadians, wherever they come from want Canadian citizenship and want to live in Canada as Canadians.

Others have said—and they repeated the words of a great American—that one should not weaken the strong in order to strengthen the weak. Unfortunately, that does not apply here at all. It is not a matter of the strong or the weak, but one of justice and injustice. If we want Canada to be strong and united, justice must be achieved by allowing Canadians to vote in Canada. Then, the situation will improve, and there will be less disunity.

It is said that this will restrict the franchise. Of course. I was astonished to hear that thousands of British subjects living in Canada would no longer have the right to vote. Did those people really have the right to vote legally, seriously and logically? They were entitled to the franchise through a special favour. Now, finally, they are to have the right to vote as Canadian citizens. Their being Canadian citizens will in no way restrict the right to vote they request. For instance, they could vote tomorrow if they have lived in Canada for 40 years.

I do hope, from the bottom of my heart, that today hon. members understand the importance of this amendment. I ask all members, old or young, whether they are British subjects or from some other groups, in short all those who came to live in Canada to think it over thoroughly before voting on this amendment.

I can understand—I always did—that every time the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) hears something about becoming more Canadian, he is likely to have a heart attack. I believe those who moved the amendment before us made a great step toward progress.

Some members said a while ago that one must not judge by appearances. But since Confederation, we have failed to live our real life, as we were always concerned about appearances.

Surely we are serious enough to forget about our forefathers. It is too late to feel sorry for them but it is time now to make one's life here in Canada. We have to stop crying. We do not feel sorry for France. We have to stop yearning for Great Britain and live in Canada. That is all I ask from new Canadians who earn their living in Canada and who wish for, as we do, a greater Canada, but it must not be done under false pretenses because I cannot see how a British subject would want a greater Canada.