

Canada Elections Act

but has happened at least 50 times in the past few months. I have been able to assist these people to get their certificates, but that does not lessen the injustice.

Mr. Deachman: May I ask the hon. member a question? Do the passport regulations not now require proof of citizenship which, if you were a British subject and acquired citizenship by virtue of your British citizenship under the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947, simply means that you must produce your Canadian citizenship certificate or, if you were born in Canada, simply produce your birth certificate? Is there not a difference between simply producing a certificate to indicate your Canadian citizenship and taking out citizenship, as the hon. member suggests?

Mr. Thompson: There is practically no difference. To answer your question—

Mr. Deachman: Just a minute. Practically—

Mr. Thompson: Let me answer. A person born in Canada is one thing. If he has his birth certificate or other proof of his Canadian birth he is automatically a Canadian citizen. That is true. However, a British subject who has been in this country for X number of years is not entitled to a passport until he can provide proof of Canadian citizenship which he can only acquire by taking out a citizenship certificate.

Mr. McGrath: That is a fact and the hon. member knows it.

Mr. Thompson: This situation arises day after day in the passport office. It is necessary to have a special staff to deal with the situation. This is a travesty of justice. It does not make for the just society that some hon. members opposite like to talk about.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thompson: To return to the hon. member's question—

Mr. Prud'homme: May I ask a simple question? These are very difficult problems but I think we can talk about them in a reasonable way. With all due respect to hon. members, is it not a fact that the majority of the Canadian people find it reasonable that you have to be a Canadian citizen? I accept the fact that up until now it has been possible, but is it not reasonable that you must be a Canadian citizen to sit in the Canadian House of Commons? Is it not reasonable that you should be

a Canadian citizen to have a Canadian passport? There should be no discussion. It is a fact. Is that not reasonable?

Mr. Thompson: I say to the hon. member for Saint-Denis that I raised this question because I believe it should be brought to the attention of this House and I do not recall it being done in the past. I think the situation I have been describing is very inequitable and unjust. With the present amendment this problem can well be duplicated and can cause similar problems. The hon. member for Saint-Denis referred to the fact that it will be difficult to provide the proof of citizenship rights that would be necessary under this amendment. I question the practical aspect of it.

As the hon. member mentioned, I am sure there must be some reasonable solution, but the matter is not that simple. Regardless of what the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra has said, I question the legal and technical right of some hon. members of this House to sit here, including some who have been here for a number of years but who, strictly according to the present law, are not Canadian citizens. This is completely wrong and unjust. I leave it at that. I wanted to bring it to the attention of the House.

● (11:50 a.m.)

Mr. McIntosh: If I might add briefly to what my hon. friend has just said, the objection I take to the present procedure with regard to passports is easily explained. The hon. member for Saint-Denis said he thought we should be reasonable, that we would like to be Canadians. Well, most of us thought we were Canadians by virtue of previous acts. But the government, in its wisdom, regardless of whether or not a man has sat in this House and served over one-third of his life in the public service, now says: If you want a passport you must provide proof of citizenship.

I would have thought that since I spent six years in the armed services the department would have proof that I was a Canadian, or that I wore Canadian badges in the war. I wonder what would happen to me if I were travelling in Europe, after fighting for six years for what I thought was my country, and then found I could not get back into Canada.

Mr. Osler: Would the hon. member permit a question? I respect the hon. member's feelings but I think his argument is fallacious. I was in the Air Force where I was surrounded by Americans who thought enough of the cause to join that service. They had no inten-