

*Canada Elections Act*

preceding the polling day of an election is qualified to vote. That is a reciprocal arrangement which we have with a number of countries in the British Commonwealth such as the United Kingdom, which was specifically mentioned by the hon. member for Hillsborough, New Zealand, Australia and a number of the Caribbean countries. I think that if a citizen of one of these nations comes to Canada, has been here a year and is interested in our institutions and our country he should have an inducement to stay and enrich this country.

There are many things I could say. I listened with interest to the points made by the hon. gentleman who just spoke. I do not agree with him but to use an old cliché may I say that I would defend to the death his right to have his opinion and express it in this, the highest court of the country. At the appropriate time it is my intention to move the following amendment:

Resolved that Clause 14(3) be deleted and the following substituted:

(3) Every British subject, other than a Canadian citizen who has been ordinarily resident in Canada for the twelve months immediately preceding polling day at such election, is qualified as an elector.

That is the law as it presently stands and this is the intent of my motion when it is moved.

**Mr. Allmand:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a few words in this debate. I strongly support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Matane. Since he presented his amendment, we have had a proposed amendment by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. While the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra an improvement in the text of the law at present, I still feel it is not as good as the proposal put forward by the hon. member for Matane. I do not think it is as good as the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Matane because it perpetuates a privileged position given to certain people in Canada for five years. In the five-year period, we could have two general elections. We had general elections in 1962, 1963 and 1965. There were three general elections in a period of four years. It is certain that within the five-year period which would elapse after the proclamation of this bill there would be one election and it is possible, if there should be a minority government, that there would be another general election.

I support the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Matane. If it should be

defeated, I would seriously consider supporting the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. I would certainly support it in preference to what is now in the text of the law. I believe it is deplorable that we give the right to vote to people who do not have sufficient interest in this country to become citizens. In this way, we give the right to vote to people who have pledged allegiance to another country. This is an indication that there is still a vestige of colonialism in our laws. This should be changed quickly. We should be consistent and logical in this matter. It is very unfair to other immigrants who know just as much or more about Canada. There are immigrants from the United States, from Maine, Vermont or New York State, who come to live here in towns and cities which they have visited for many years. They do not have the same privilege. We should be consistent in this regard.

Another reason I support the amendment of the hon. member for Matane is that the type of exception which is proposed in the law complicates the compiling of the electoral list. Can anyone imagine an enumerator going from door to door asking people whether they are Canadians and, if the answer is no, having to ask them whether they were eligible to vote as of June 25, 1968. The person being interviewed would have to remember whether he was here at that time, and whether the members of his family were here at that time, in order to determine whether or not they were eligible to vote on June 25, 1968. I suggest that such a provision in our law leads to much confusion and difficulty in respect of compiling a sound electoral list.

I should like to refer for a moment to some of the remarks made by some of the other participants in this discussion. The hon. member for Hillsborough discussed the problem as if it just meant that persons from the United Kingdom would have the right to vote in Canadian elections without having Canadian citizenship. I presume that was merely an oversight. It is in fact the case that people from all Commonwealth countries have this right, including I believe people from Ireland. I think such a provision was placed in the law at one time. The hon. member also referred to reciprocity. It is true that Canadians can vote in the United Kingdom under reciprocal arrangements, but this is not true in respect of all Commonwealth countries. I am led to believe, for example, that in India a Canadian cannot vote unless he is a citizen of India, although a citizen of India can vote in Canada with one year's residence.