

*Canada Elections Act*

myself convinced that this action was motivated by some anti-British feeling. I would vote against it. But I consider that this change comes within the natural development of our country towards what we call the total equality of all Canadians.

Does my hon. friend not believe that the feelings which motivated the flag debate are somewhat similar to those which motivate the debate now in progress?

[*English*]

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Chairman, I think the very fact that the hon. member for Saint-Denis poses that question shows the danger and/or confusion that will arise if we prolong debate on clause 14(3). I am not going to be diverted by any red herring about the flag. I was not in the chamber then, but if I had been no doubt I would have contributed my thoughts. We are not debating the flag. This section of the bill concerns rights given by previous Parliaments of Canada, citizenship rights and voting rights.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I suggest to my hon. friend that there is a big difference between this debate and a debate on what type of flag or national anthem the country is going to have. That is a sentimental subject, an emotional subject. Nothing was crystallized in a statute and that was why it was debated, so that we could have a national anthem and a flag. But that is another issue. The fact that my friend has tried to infer that my remarks are resurrecting the flag debate points out the danger we are in when discussing clause 14 (3).

I am saying sincerely that we are not dealing with emotion or blood, sweat and tears, as was the case in the flag debate, when the heart often ruled the head and speeches got emotional. Here, we are talking about rights under a statute, and I submit that the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Matane takes away those rights. It does not achieve what the hon. member for Fraser Valley East says he has in mind. Amending future rights is the purpose of Parliament but this amendment takes away rights. It is iniquitous indeed when the Parliament of any country, and especially our country composed of two founding races and many new Canadians, plays retroactively with the rights of citizens. As far as I am concerned, it is as simple and as basic as that.

**Mr. St. Pierre:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to this debate with a great deal of interest,

and it seems to me to have had a content which is lacking all too often in this chamber. Some of the remarks have been heavily charged with emotion, but that is not necessarily bad because it was an emotion that came out of sincerity and strong feeling for the country in an effort to do what was best for the country. In my remarks, however, I would hope to be entirely unemotional on this matter and to come down to the dry dust of the facts as I see them.

First of all, I should like to make a brief reference to the remarks concerning the status of the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek, because I feel a misunderstanding could result from this exchange. I suggest the hon. member was not asked to take out Canadian citizenship in order to get his passport but was in the position of a great number of Canadians during this past year and a half who have been asked and obliged to supply proof of citizenship. There is no doubt and no one disputes that the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek is a Canadian. I do not think that he or other hon. members should object to being asked for proof of Canadian citizenship. Neither do I think that I, or any native born Canadian or long naturalized Canadian citizen, should object. Let us remind ourselves of the situation when the issuance of Canadian passports was a scandal. Spies and other undesirables were making use of our lax laws in order to obtain false passports for improper purposes, so this country had a duty to itself and to the international community to tighten the regulations. This involves the presentation of proof of citizenship and, in my opinion is entirely proper.

Returning to the point at issue, after having listened to almost all of the debate it seems to me that there is a general disposition on all sides of the House to believe that citizenship is a privilege to be sought and that it should be a requirement for those who wish to vote in Canadian elections. There also seems to be a feeling that the special status enjoyed by some citizens of other countries should not be continued.

The hon. member for Brandon-Souris offered one exception to this. He felt that we should retain the present system for British people coming to this country and also that we should extend it to include French people. I find myself totally out of sympathy with this proposition and I have not heard hon. members from Quebec evince the slightest interest in offering special status to citizens of