

Order Paper Questions

PARLIAMENTARY OBSERVERS AT UNITED NATIONS

Question No. 3,576—**Mr. Landers:**

1. Does the Department of External Affairs intend to send Members of Parliament and Senators to New York as UN observers in the future?

2. Will translating services be provided in the Canadian mission in New York to enable unilingual observers to understand the briefing sessions?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): 1. Yes.

2. No. The officers of our mission and the members of our delegation in New York work in the official language of their choice in accordance with the bilingualism policy of the Canadian government. Most of the officers are bilingual. The informal format of the briefing sessions normally permits any unilingual participant to raise any question or seek clarification on any matter that may have been discussed in the other official language during the meeting.

DISABILITY PENSIONS

Question No. 3,584—**Mr. Forrestall:**

Is the Minister of Veterans Affairs satisfied that applications for disability pensions handled by the Canadian Pension Commission from applicants with serious disabilities threatened by imminent death are handled within a reasonable time frame?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Yes. The Canadian Pension Commission has a priority system which takes into account situations where there is an urgent social or medical need. Where the Commission is aware of the "imminent death" of an applicant, the claim is handled on a top priority basis.

WAR VETERANS ALLOWANCE BOARD—LAWYERS RETAINED IN CONSTITUENCY OF VICTORIA, B.C.

Question No. 3,621—**Mr. McKinnon.**

1. What were the names and addresses of all lawyers and law firms in the Constituency of Victoria, British Columbia who performed services for the War Veterans Allowance Board during 1973 and 1974?

2. By year, what was the total amount paid to each?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): 1. Nil.

2. Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH CONDITIONS AND PROVISIONS GOVERNING CITIZENSHIP

The House resumed, from Wednesday, May 21, consideration of the motion of Mr. Faulkner that Bill C-20, respecting citizenship, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, back on May 21, 1975, I first had the opportunity to make some brief remarks respecting my position on Bill C-20. At that time I pointed out quite clearly that the joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons was conducting hearings across Canada relative to future or possible changes in Canada's immigration laws, and that the question of citizenship and its requirements were part and parcel of that discussion. It was my view at that time that the debate should be delayed until such time as the committee had had an opportunity to present to the House the findings it was able to make in its travels across Canada and at hearings in Ottawa. With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I intend to bring to your attention and to the attention of the House some of the recommendations of that committee as they reflect on Canada's present citizenship act.

Also in my brief remarks on May 21 I stressed the positive aspects of the bill, namely, that the bill will correct a deficiency which now exists in the Canadian Citizenship Act in that it is proposed that citizenship be granted to a child born outside of Canada if one of his or her parents is a Canadian citizen. It is a right that is presently only held by male members of our society but which should be extended to female members. That provision in the bill has my endorsement.

The second matter concerns lowering the eligibility age from 21 to 18. It stated on May 21 that those regulations should have been brought in when the Canada Elections Act was amended. That is another deficiency which Bill C-20 corrects. The central thrust of Bill C-20, as I see it, is the reduction of the waiting period for residency requirements and qualifications of landed immigrants, which at the present time is five years; that is, five years from the time an immigrant receives landed immigrant status when he can apply for citizenship and become a Canadian citizen if he fulfils the requirements.

The proponents of this provision argue that five years is an arbitrary figure and say that three years is more equitable. They say, also, that it reduces somewhat the arbitrariness of the act and the stigma of having to wait a long period of time which could make immigrants feel they are regarded as second-class citizens. I pointed out on May 21 that the residency requirements presently in effect in the United States, Britain, Belgium, West Germany, Australia and New Zealand are generally five years or longer. I am sure hon. members could also point to the fact that in some countries the residency requirements are less than five years, and that this period of time would be no less or no more arbitrary than the present requirement of five years in Canada.

However, I should like to point out that very few countries in the world could be termed receiving countries, that is, countries which receive significant numbers of immigrants yearly. Canada happens to be one of these countries. There are very few countries in the world which meet those qualifications. In fact, in the last five years Canada has welcomed to its shores approximately one million immigrants. So I suggest that our citizenship requirements have slightly different ramifications from those of countries which have very few people coming in as landed immigrants.