

Citizenship

the citizenship court, ought to have the right to look into the question of good character.

I have an instance that came to me, which brought this home to me as an important omission from this bill, namely, the reservation to someone in authority of the question of good character. There is a constituent of mine who has two children, both of them girls. There is a person living in my constituency who is, in effect, watching and besetting those two girls. That man has never committed a criminal offence. The girls know it is happening, the father knows it is happening, the police now know it is happening, and I know it is happening.

They may never get a conviction against this person, who is a landed immigrant, yet in my judgment, and I think in the minister's judgment if the case were brought before him, or in the judgment of a citizenship court, while he has not contravened those parameters in which the minister is interested, any right minded person would say that that person is not fit to be here. It was perhaps a mistake to allow him here in the first place, though I think not from checking the records. But having come here, he is not a proper person, if we have a choice, to whom citizenship ought to be granted. That is the kind of case which has come to my attention in support of the submission that there is a case to be made for the vesting of power in somebody that would appear to be impartial. I understand the reason behind this omission, and I want to make that clear to the minister. But I really think it is important, and that it is one which ought to be considered.

I shall quote the minister again. I do not disagree with what he said. He said, as reported at page 5986 of *Hansard*:

Canadian citizenship enables one to do several things: to vote, to run for public office, to carry a Canadian passport, to exercise certain activities where citizenship is a statutory pre-requisite.

Then he went on to deal with intangibles. I must say I think citizenship carries with it something far beyond those things, and far beyond the sense of belonging to which the minister later alluded in that portion of his speech. I think citizenship carries with it not only activities that the new citizen is enabled to engage in as a result of citizenship, but carries with it obligations that the new citizen, as well as the older citizen, owes to his community in terms of behaviour. I think it is not unreasonable that provision ought to be there in the law of the receiving country for recognizing judicially a "man of good character" in that broad sense. While admitting that mistakes may be made from time to time. I think it is not unreasonable to ask the minister, when it comes before the committee, whether or not that ought not still to be in the bill.

I do not want to take up the time of the House any longer. I want to thank the minister for being here. He was here the other evening when I spoke; I merely want to reiterate the importance citizenship courts have in the scheme of things, and the fact that I regret very much they seem to be downgraded somewhat in the legislation. The experiment with respect to citizenship courts has been a relatively short one, and I wonder if the ministry is not being perhaps a bit premature in terms of the judgment it is making with respect to them.

● (1540)

Mr. Bill Kempling (Halton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record a few remarks on this bill. As everyone knows, it was introduced in the House and given first reading in October, 1974. It came on for second reading late in May of 1975 and we are now continuing that stage before passing it on to committee. I do not know what the urgency is, but at any rate we are dealing with the bill today.

This bill contains certain positive points with which I very much agree—for instance, equal treatment of men and women. For example, an alien wife or the husband of a Canadian citizen wanting to gain citizenship will be subject to the same waiting period, and this is a good feature of the bill. A father or mother can apply to register a child as a Canadian citizen; derivation of citizenship can come from either parent. This is another excellent point for which I commend the minister. Another positive step is the reduction in the age of eligibility for citizenship from 21 years to 18. I have personally become acquainted with this sort of situation many times in cases where the parents have separated. The father can not be found or his permission can not be obtained, and this is another good feature in the bill.

There are some other provisions in the bill that I hope will be closely examined in committee. I say hope because I am becoming somewhat frustrated with the gerrymandering of the committees of this House. If we do not take hold of the situation in the new session, I think the whole committee system will go down the drain.

While I am discussing the provisions of the bill I might make reference to clause 33(1) in Part VIII dealing with the status of persons in Canada. This clause provides:

Real and personal property of every description may be taken, acquired, held and disposed of by a person who is not a Canadian citizen in the same manner in all respects as by a Canadian citizen; and a title to real and personal property of every description may be derived through, from or in succession to a person who is not a Canadian citizen in the same manner in all respects as through, from or in succession to a Canadian citizen.

The rights of owners of personal property who come from another country is a very delicate subject. I am well aware that many Canadians own property in countries other than Canada, so there is a reciprocal factor here. The provinces are very much aware of the problem. Indeed in my own particular riding, as a matter of fact in the town I live in, a whole block has been held by a citizen of Portugal for something like 10 years; the place is a shambles and the town is powerless to do anything about it. The owner of the property is always delinquent in his taxes, but just when the town is ready to seize his property for non-payment of taxes he pays a few back taxes and the same thing starts all over again. This sort of thing has been going on for about 10 years. He even threatened the town with law suits when it passed certain by-laws pertaining to commercial buildings, claiming that the by-laws inhibited him in developing the property.

Sooner or later this is an area about which we will have to take a firm stand. There are numerous instances like this in various parts of the country that I have come across; property is held and held and held, and nothing can be done about its appearance. In the instance I have cited the