



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

## CITIZENSHIP

An address by The Honourable Colin Gibson,  
Secretary of State, to the Kitchener-Waterloo  
Rotary Club, April 19, 1948.

To-day I have taken "Citizenship" as the subject of my remarks, and I should at once explain that I have not done so through any belief that your members are not good citizens.

On the contrary, the very fact that you are here, as Rotarians, is a guarantee of your qualifications as good citizens, and of your interest in citizenship.

For many years most of us who reside in Canada have considered ourselves as Canadians, although we dimly realized that internationally we were regarded as British Subjects domiciled in Canada.

As is well known, Canada's contribution in the First World War, earned for us the status of nationhood, which was recognized by our being called upon to sign the Treaty of Versailles; and this status as an autonomous nation was confirmed by the Statute of Westminster in 1931.

But our status as individuals was not so clearly defined, and at International Conferences our delegates were referred to, not as Canadians, but as Canadian British Subjects.

In order to distinguish Canadians from other British Subjects, we passed a Canadian Nationals Act in 1921, but this rather complicated the issue by defining a Canadian National as "a British Subject who is a Canadian Citizen, within the meaning of the Immigration Act".

In addition, we had a Naturalization Act by which a foreigner could become a British Subject, so that by studying the Naturalization Act, the Immigration Act and the Canadian Nationals Act, a person could discover how to become a Canadian National!

Our new Canadian Citizenship Act, which came into force on the 1st January, 1947, cleared up many of the difficulties and uncertainties of the past, and made clear our right to be officially recognized as Canadians.

Under its provisions, all persons born in Canada automatically become Canadian citizens, and cannot be deprived of their citizenship unless they themselves take definite steps to acquire other nationality.

Those who are naturalized here become citizens and retain their citizenship so long as they remain here. Should they leave for prolonged periods, and fail to report, their citizenship can only be revoked after an absence of six years.