

member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) because his bill and his terms are more flexible than the government's. I do not want to go into their crux of that discussion but I would simply want to say that the major problem now is not only a reduction from 5 to 3 years of residence. I must say, and I already had a discussion with the registrar of citizenship in that regard, that it is a matter of determining what is meant by residence.

Unfortunately, some presiding judges contended in the past years that one month's absence to visit relatives in the native country constituted a partial surrender of residence and they insisted on a real physical presence in the country to determine the residence under the provisions of the Citizenship Act. That is nonsense, because a person could not even spend, for instance, a weekend or some time in the United States or elsewhere without compromising his residence period for citizenship purposes.

So we have been able to obtain, I hope, a flexible and more logical interpretation and now we shall have to insist however when Bill C-20 is debated so that we shall have no difficulty in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to agree with what the hon. member for Saint-Denis said, but since Bill C-209 and Bill C-20 differ, in my opinion we should rather refer the subject matter of Bill C-209 to the committee that will study Bill C-20. Subject to those considerations, I therefore do not hesitate to ask for the approval of this House.

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I was one of those involved in the discussions through the usual channels about this bill, and I am happy to confirm our agreement to the proposal that the subject matter of Bill C-209 be referred to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts so that it can be considered there along with the provisions of the government's Bill C-20 which, at some point, will also be sent to that same committee.

In a moment I will have an additional suggestion to make. I do not know if there is anyone on the government side in the House at present in a position to agree to my request, but that does not stop me from trying. First, may I say that I believe that all of us agree with the desire of the hon. member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme), namely, that persons who have been in Canada for 3 years, have landed immigrant status, and desire to become Canadian citizens, should be able to do so within that period of time rather than having to wait as long as the law at present requires.

As both of the previous speakers have pointed out, there is a slight difference between the provision in Bill C-209 and the provision in this respect that is contained in Bill C-20. This, of course, can be sorted out in committee, and I think it is a good idea to have the proposal of a private member go to that committee along with the government bill.

Therefore we are happy to support the motion which, I presume, will be made at some point by way of an amendment that the subject matter of Bill C-20 be referred to the appropriate standing committee.

Canadian Citizenship Act

The suggestion I would like to make relates to a couple of bills of mine that are on the order paper. One of them is Bill C-260 and the other is Bill C-317. Both of these bills also relate to changes that I think should be made in the Citizenship Act, and I hope that the House might also be willing to allow the subject matter of these two bills to go to the same committee along with the subject matter of Bill C-209.

They are Orders Nos. 60 and 117, or Bills C-260 and C-317. Both of these bills are particularly appropriate in International Women's Year. The first one, Bill C-260, has to do with the citizenship of a child born outside of Canada. As the law now stands, such a child can, under certain conditions, become a Canadian citizen if the child is the child of a father who is a Canadian citizen. This is not permitted if it is only the mother who is a Canadian citizen, except in the case of an illegitimate child. Surely it is time to straighten that out, Mr. Speaker. I have the feeling that Bill C-20 takes care of it, but just to make sure that this point was covered I gave notice of my Bill C-260, and I hope that the subject matter of it might also be referred to the standing committee.

The other bill, Bill C-317, has to do with another discrimination against females. As the law now stands, if a Canadian male citizen brings in a wife who is not a Canadian, she can become a Canadian citizen in one year. In other words the male Canadian citizen can confer a certain right on his spouse. But if a female Canadian citizen brings in a husband who is not a Canadian citizen, he has to wait five years. In other words a Canadian male can confer a certain right on his spouse that is denied a Canadian female.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): We need male lib here.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I gave notice, as I said, of my Bill C-317 which would simply change one word in the Canadian Citizenship Act. Where the word now is "wife" the word would be "spouse". I have searched through Bill C-20 and in some of its gobbledegook this point may be covered, but I have not found it. I have the notion that, along with the idea about the length of residence required in order to become a Canadian citizen, the committee should also consider correcting these two cases of discrimination against females.

I hope that the House at this point might be willing to make this motion broad enough to send the subject matter of all three of these bills to the committee. I want to make it clear that I do not make the acceptance of this request a condition with regard to the other. I have agreed that the subject matter of my friend's Bill C-209 should go to the committee, but I hope that in this International Women's Year we might send the whole package. I believe all hon. members are agreed that the ideas in these three bills are all good.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I also agreed on immediately sending Bill C-209 to committee, not only because we are studying Bill C-20, presented by the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner), but above all because it is a bill which in my opinion is necessary. Even if there may have been some misunderstanding between the hon.