

Canada Elections Act

right hon. member to the statement of the hon. member for Hillsborough at page 8255 of *Hansard*.

• (11.40 a.m.)

I think there was a general disposition within the standing committee that the position which had previously existed, not so much discriminating in favour of British subjects but discriminating against those Canadian immigrants of origins other than the United Kingdom, should not persist. The stand taken generally by the standing committee at that time was that the position should be that any British subject other than a Canadian citizen who had been entitled to vote in the last election should not have that right taken away but that in future British subjects who have immigrated to Canada, as well as other immigrants such as Italians, Ukrainians and Poles, should be on an equal basis. Once they have taken out Canadian citizenship they should have the right to vote, but not before. That is the position of the government with regard to this bill. In fairness it should be put on the record that the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Matane, which is his right, is the initiative of the hon. member. It does not in any sense represent the view of the government.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I fully realize what the hon. member has said. However, whatever the amendment may be, the stand taken by the government on this and many other matters to which reference was made is not apologized for or defended by the minister. He could not deny the fact that this government is determined to push its way through to bring about a republic in Canada. I have nothing to withdraw in that connection. That has been the attitude of some ministers of the government. They have stated they are in favour of such action. One of them voted for the Liberal Party abolition motion. The Prime Minister of Canada said he did not vote for the abolition of the monarchy because he did not think it was a matter of sufficient importance. Indeed, he regards the question as even less important than skiing or even snowshoeing.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, I wish to take only a few moments of the committee's time to raise a problem. I wish to point it to the particular attention of the hon. member for Saint-Denis. It concerns the latest passport and citizenship regulations. I do not think this matter has been brought to the attention of the House. While it involves directly only the

[**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).**]

amendment before us, it also relates to other amendments. It is of such concern that even several members of this House are not, according to these latest regulations, Canadian citizens. I do not think the member for Swift Current-Maple Creek will mind if I mention his name, but he is one of these. I do not know where this puts the hon. member and others in similar circumstances in so far as their right to sit in the House is concerned. The fact is that under the present statutes and the current passport regulations a person born in Great Britain, no matter whether he has lived here for 40 or 50 years, served in the armed forces or held public office, is not a Canadian citizen. I mention the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek because that is the position he is in, having been born in Scotland. I can see this happening with the amendment now before us as it relates to a British subject, living in this country at the last election, having the right to vote in any future election.

Last Saturday I received a telephone call from a man in my constituency who is well into his seventies. He was literally weeping over the telephone. He had received an urgent call and wanted to return to Great Britain for a visit. He came to this country prior to World War I. In fact I think it was in 1907. He served in World War I in the Canadian army. He is now being denied the right to receive a Canadian passport until he becomes a Canadian citizen.

Mr. Deachman: Wrong.

Mr. Thompson: I challenge that.

Mr. Deachman: You have your facts all wrong.

Mr. Thompson: He cannot receive a passport except on a temporary one year basis. Even though he has had ten passports in the past, he must now verify his personal record and take out a Canadian citizenship certificate before he can receive a current passport. The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra should verify what he is saying because it is not true.

Even though a British subject has lived in this country 60 years, has assumed the rights of a Canadian citizen, has had passports in the past and has served in the armed forces, until he takes out a citizenship certificate, which I admit is not a very difficult process, he is denied a passport. The member for Vancouver Quadra is in error when he denies that. This did not only happen last Saturday