

Canada Elections Act

for a period of one year following the granting of landed immigrant status is deemed to be qualified as an elector.

I realize the hon. member for Skeena has suggested that a privilege similar to this be extended to all landed immigrants in Canada, and this is a step that the members of the committee might want to take. I think the special privileges that have been granted to British subjects up to the present time derive from the fact that our political institutions in Canada are based substantially on the traditions that emanate from the Mother of Parliaments. Indeed, the Mother of Parliaments has been the creative source of most of the democratic parliamentary institutions around the world.

We in Canada also have another mother country, France, and in recent years there has been a desire on the part of large numbers of Canadians to establish creative contact with France. It has already been mentioned that reciprocal privileges are granted in other Commonwealth nations with respect to Commonwealth citizenship. It seems to me that these are the values that should be emphasized in a day and age that is becoming a bit of a nationalistic jungle, at a time when the world is becoming a veritable whispering gallery. I trust that the members of this committee will move in a positive direction rather than negative.

[Translation]

Mr. Laflamme: Mr. Chairman, I only wish to point out that in committee we unanimously agreed on principle to require that a person be a Canadian citizen in order to have the right to vote.

As for the vested interests of citizens who enjoyed certain rights on a reciprocal basis, all that is needed is to make a few amendments for the future.

As far as I am concerned, I would have supported the unanimous decision reached by the members of the committee. However, the committee of the whole has before it some interesting suggestions, among them the one made by the hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané) who defines the principle to which, I believe, all members of the committee have agreed. For the implementation of this suggestion, the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Deachman) suggested a moment ago that those who, to date, have enjoyed their franchise without being Canadian citizens should be granted a five-year period—one can really not quarrel with that if one

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

shares the opinion of the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) that Canadian citizenship must mean something—in order to become Canadian citizens, and this without prejudice to rights that were exercised by those who were residents of Canada during election periods. A five-year period, in my opinion, is fair, and will allow all those who up to now have enjoyed the advantages of Canadian life to take the required steps to acquire Canadian citizenship. The five-year period would be sufficient. I consider this would be fair and equitable for all concerned.

As for me, if the motion of the member for Matane is put before that of the member for Vancouver-Quadra which is more logical, I will vote against the first but in favour of the second so as to develop an orderly and logical procedure giving all Canadians the rights they used to have in the past, should a general election be called a year after the coming into force of this legislation, or should some citizens still be without their certificate of citizenship.

• (5:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. MacRae: Mr. Chairman, it has been said of some public figure about whom I read that he was dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century. Someone may accuse me of the same thing in respect of the amendment I intend to present. I believe very strongly in the British Commonwealth of Nations. I have always had a feeling for the British tradition. My own people have lived in this country for 200 years, in the same province as the hon. member for Matane, who proposed an amendment a while ago and the hon. member who just spoke. I cannot accept the fact that our British Commonwealth is disintegrating; perhaps it is, but I cannot accept that. I should like to think that this great association of nations to which we belong can and should continue. I was very pleased to read in the press recently that our Prime Minister is being considered as a great Commonwealth man. I think that is wonderful. I had not realized this. I thought that perhaps he leaned more toward a narrow nationalism. I am grateful that he has taken this position.

The hon. member for Hillsborough very eloquently pointed out that what we have had up until this particular point is a situation whereby every British subject other than a Canadian citizen ordinarily resident in Canada for the 12 months immediately