

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

Most people coming to Canada know there is freedom of speech and that a man can speak in any language he pleases. But they should know too that the English and French languages are in a special position and may be spoken on an equal basis. This information should in my opinion be made available to immigrants when they apply for their papers, possibly in the form of a pamphlet or brochure.

Mr. Brewin: We have heard a good deal about procedures in respect to immigration. I wish now to say something about procedures in respect to applications for citizenship. I want to urge the minister to look at the Canadian Citizenship Act and bring in amendments to it as well as to the Immigration Act.

It was said in a debate in the United Kingdom parliament that the test of a civilized country is its behaviour toward its citizens whatever their race, religion or colour. I suggest an even more searching test is the behaviour of a community toward aliens, particularly to those who are not legally or formally members of the community at all. Surely the time has come for us to scrutinize carefully the procedures by which aliens resident in Canada are admitted to the full privileges of citizenship. To refuse a person citizenship does not entail only legal disabilities. It involves in many cases a threat to livelihood; it might cause bitterness and lifelong resentment and place a stigma either real or imagined upon the character of the person to whom citizenship has been refused.

At the present time the procedures adopted under the Canadian Citizenship Act are in my view altogether unsatisfactory and give rise in many cases to unsatisfactory results. Section 10 of the act provides that an applicant for citizenship has a double barrier to overcome. First of all he has to satisfy a court—usually, I believe, a county or district court—of a number of things, including the fact that he is of good character. When he has done this and the court is satisfied in respect of these matters, he has the second barrier to overcome, namely that the minister under the act has an absolute, uncontrolled and unfettered discretion to grant or refuse citizenship, even if the court is satisfied about the applicant.

In refusing citizenship the minister does not have, because it is a matter of discretion, to state in any way the reason for his refusal. Those who have been familiar with these matters over the years—and I make no complaint

about the present minister at all; it is the procedure I am complaining about—have had cases of people who have been denied citizenship and then not told the reason why. Then when they inquire into the matter they very often find citizenship has been refused because of some sort of misinformed police report. Perhaps there was a report of some earlier association with a so-called radical or subversive organization. This undisclosed reason is thought to be sufficient ground for depriving an applicant of citizenship.

I am not saying that if these matters came to the attention of the enlightened minister this situation would prevail; but because of the system this sometimes happens. We have all heard of many cases of these so-called security reasons being given as a basis for refusal of citizenship, when really they do not make any sense at all. I myself had the case of a gentleman—I will not name him here—who has since been granted citizenship by a predecessor of the minister. However, before that he was refused citizenship. This particular man was a world famous town planner; a consultant to two metropolitan areas; an adornment of the staff of one of our great universities. This gentleman was refused citizenship. He was not told why, first of all; but on the matter being pressed and an investigation being carried out it turned out that he had at one time been a resident of Soviet Russia, where he has carried out some of his professional work. In fact, he had been expelled from that country because he did not get along with the totalitarian regime there. However, when he came back to this country he was still a great believer in good relations between the U.S.S.R. and Canada and he joined some Canada-Soviet friendship organization; I believe he was a member of an organization called the Canadian Peace Congress and was active in that body. He made no bones about it; he was perfectly frank, open and aboveboard. This gentleman was for many years—not under the present regime—refused citizenship. I say in all fairness that the predecessor of the present minister reviewed the matter and changed the decision, with the good sense one would anticipate from the former minister and from the present minister.

But my point is that the system that was in effect excluded this man from citizenship for many years, and it was only after fairly forceful representations by a number of prominent citizens that this case was able to be reviewed. But what about the humbler person who is refused citizenship perhaps because he