

*Canadian Citizenship Act***PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS***[English]***CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT****MEASURE TO REDUCE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis) moved that Bill C-209, to amend the Canadian Citizenship Act (minimum residence requirement) be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, my first words are to thank hon. ladies and gentlemen from all parts of the House for their courtesy in agreeing to send the subject matter of this bill, one I have always considered very important, to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts.

At the outset of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask unanimous consent of the House to make a correction to page 12 of the Order Paper and Notices for today. As presently written, this bill is to be sent to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration, but by consent I would ask that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts. I think that is a mistake, and it would be agreeable to send the bill to that particular committee.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): There would have to be a motion to that effect.

Mr. Prud'homme: I am asking for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker, I can at long last say that we have reached the stage where, thanks to the consent of the House and the understanding of the government, this bill which has now been before the House for four years, will soon be passed, for we know that this bill, introduced by a member will become a government bill and as such become law in the land.

Since we have agreed to speak as briefly as possible, I do not wish to keep the House for any length of time, but I should still like to point out the fact that it has always seemed logical and normal to me, as well as to hundreds of thousands of people in various countries, regardless of colour or origin, people who for various reasons have elected to settle in Canada thereby paying tribute to our country by adopting it as theirs, it has always seemed most illogical to me, as I say, to keep them waiting for as long a period as five years. In this day and age, three years should be long enough a period to determine whether, in the case of a landed immigrant, he wishes to remain in the country. After three years, it is clear that a person has decided whether or not to adopt our country on a permanent basis. I received hundreds of testimonies after introducing this bill. I do not wish to seem pretentious and claim that hundreds were received each time I introduced the bill; but if I add them all up together, since the bill has been introduced each year since 1970, I have all told

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner).]

received hundreds of testimonies from all parts of the country.

[English]

I have a number of quotes I could give from Winnipeg, Edmonton and Toronto, and a few from Quebec—because unfortunately, as we all know, not too many people choose Quebec as their new adopted province—supporting the granting of citizenship in Canada after three years.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, since my bill seems to differ perceptibly from government Bill C-20, I naturally agreed, and again I thank the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) for agreeing to refer this bill to a committee because my suggestion requires three of the last five years, while the government proposal will require three of the last four years.

I hope the House will give its consent to refer this bill to a committee. I also hope that I shall have the opportunity to introduce it to the committee, because it seems more flexible than the government's measure and does not affect in any way the people who would apply immediately after three years' residence. It must be clear that when we say three of the last five years, this does not affect in any way the people who have obtained the status of landed immigrant and spent three years in this country, they will be able, of course, to apply immediately for Canadian citizenship. This is rather for the people who were absent for a period of time and who have come back to this country and are now applying for Canadian citizenship. It is in this sense that one must understand the explanation about three years out of five, the last five years, or three out of four, the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, I will dispense with all the evidence I could quote because I thought this bill would not be considered by the House today. So I will dispense with all the quotations I had prepared but I will be using them in committee when my bill is sent to it along with the government's.

But again I would like to stress the importance of this bill for the entire country. I would like to thank beforehand the officials of the Secretary of State for Canada—the whole bureaucracy which often bears the brunt of our attacks—for the excellent work they do because I know this bill will enormously increase their task in years to come since they will have to deal with thousands of applications from new citizens, not to say hundreds of thousands. I know that those officials will understand the spirit which prompts the House today to accept our proposal and that, as they are now doing magnificently, they will carry out the task of administering this bill with which we are entrusting them.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank you as well as my colleagues for agreeing to send this bill to the Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I entirely agree that we refer this bill to committee because as could be seen there is a difference between the contents of this bill and Bill C-20, specially in clause 5 of the bill proposed by the government. I think when the committee determines the principles of Bill C-20 it will have to consider the alternative proposed by the hon.