

Canadian Citizenship Act

When that absence was explained and was certified by the department of the provincial government in question, this citizenship certificate was forthcoming. Then there was the problem of his wife, and that is where I think this particular section of the act should have some amendment. This gentleman—

Mr. Pickersgill: May I interrupt the hon. gentleman, Mr. Speaker? In the bill, as the hon. gentleman will find if he has considered it carefully, we are making provision for that very thing. Perhaps if the hon. gentleman could defer this matter until we reach the clause in the bill, it could then be explained.

Mr. Knight: Now that I have gone so far, Mr. Speaker, and have only another minute or two to go, I think I had probably better state my case. Then the whole case can be replied to by the minister, if he sees fit to do so, when we are in committee. The thing that bothered my acquaintance so greatly was this. This is the type of person who attaches some value to a certificate of Canadian citizenship. I think the very fact that he applied for it is a proof of that statement. He is a family man with a wife and two little children. Let it be right or let it be wrong, and let anyone who likes to do so sneer at it as a piece of sentimentality, but he wanted the date of his citizenship to coincide with the date of citizenship of his wife and his children.

Mr. Pickersgill: We always do our best to oblig.

Mr. Knight: Whether it be sentimentality or not, that is the way he wanted it; and he saw no reason why the department should apply red tape to the extent that he would not be able to get it that way. It was not as though there was anything against the man. Nevertheless he felt that he had been treated like someone, as it were, outside the pale, someone who had to be watched, about whom one had to take care, and that sort of thing. For a man who has been a British subject all his life and who has spent five years in Canada, it is not a pleasant feeling to have around his new home.

He applied for citizenship for his wife and he reasonably thought that it might be granted at the same time as his own citizenship but from the minister's department he had a blunt refusal on the ground, forsooth, that he had gone to Britain to do some studying; that he had taken his wife and his little family with him. While he comes under this clause which allows a man to be out of the country in the service of the country, that clause did not apply to his wife because she accompanied her husband. I understand that is not the sort of thing we want to do. What

do we want to do? If this man had forced the department and said that he was going to insist that his wife get her citizenship at the same time as he did, what would it involve? It would involve leaving his wife and family here in this country. I think that is a perfectly stupid regulation. I think it is a regulation which would be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. In that particular case surely the department could have said: It is perfectly natural that this man leaving the country for seven months should take his wife and family with him. I do not see what reason in the world the department could give for not granting that woman's certification of Canadian citizenship so that the two of them could have gone up there together on the 18th day of this month before the public at Saskatoon where there is going to be constituted a court where citizenship could have been granted. They should have gone up there together and received their citizenship on that date. Is there any reason in common sense why that could not have been done? There may be in the regulations. I understand the difficulties that civil servants have. "There is the regulation", they say; "We must interpret the law". But if that is the law, in a case like that the law should be changed.

I think that is the main part of my argument. I could go on and be indignant about it. I may say the gentleman in question was indignant. As a matter of fact, he requested the department to take back his citizenship certificate and withhold it so that those two certificates could be issued on the same day and they would have them together. Sentiment—all right, but a lot of us are sentimental and that is the way the man felt about it. That is the plea I am putting before the minister, that to cover that particular section of the act a change should be made so that when a man takes his wife with him on these government jobs which entitles him to a certificate even if he is absent from his country, his wife could share his fate, shall I say, in that as well as other respects.

I have not mentioned the man's name. I do not think it is necessary for me to do so. If the minister, out of the kindness of his heart, wants to take this up as an individual case and look into it, even at this late date, I would suggest that would be a good course to adopt. I have made my protest to the minister, without wearying the house about the details and reading various letters, the tone of some of which is not too cordial or too friendly. The attitude is: here are the regulations, you take them or leave them. They have to take them. They do not like to take them. I would not have liked to