

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 24, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate have passed Bill C-12, an Act to establish the International Development Research Centre, with amendments, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

PRIVILEGE

MR. STEWART (COCHRANE)—TREATMENT OF CERTAIN PRIVATE BILLS BY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

Mr. Ralph Stewart (Cochrane): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. This question of privilege is twofold. It arises as a consequence of the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections which appears in *Votes and Proceedings* for last Thursday.

One of the main considerations of that committee was the question of qualifications of electors and candidates in elections. I had presented a bill, C-120, similar to a bill which had been presented by the Minister without Portfolio from York-Scarborough and to two other bills which were on the Order Paper. All these bills, which were referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, provided that all people who vote in elections or who are candidates in elections should be Canadian citizens. The idea was that the Canada Elections Act would be changed so that British subjects who were not Canadian citizens would no longer be entitled to vote in elections or be candidates in an election.

Apparently this matter was considered by the Committee on Privileges and Elections and in its fourth report under item 9 of Part I of the recommendations the sense of those bills has been completely reversed. It states in effect that only Canadian citizens would be qualified as electors and then in parentheses these words are added:

for this purpose British subjects, other than Canadian citizens, who were ordinarily resident in Canada on the 25th day of June 1967, be deemed to be Canadian citizens.

Mr. Speaker, one cannot be deemed to be a Canadian citizen. Either one is a Canadian citizen or is not. This whole thing is a mockery of the bills that were referred to the committee. Under the guise of saying that one must be a Canadian citizen in order to qualify as an elector the committee has added in parentheses that a British subject is to be deemed to be a Canadian citizen.

• (2:10 p.m.)

My question of privilege is twofold. First of all, the committee has no right to take bills and turn them around.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Why not?

Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): Second, a committee, when considering a bill of an hon. member, should at least invite the hon. member who presented the bill to be present at the hearing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): Who else is more qualified to speak about the bill than the author of the bill? This was not done and is never done. I suggest that these are two points of privilege which must be considered, and I am prepared to move a motion accordingly if Your Honour will accept this question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: May I first thank the hon. member for his co-operation in agreeing yesterday to postpone the consideration of this matter until this sitting of the House. The delay has made it possible to give additional consideration to the interesting point he has raised for determination by the Chair. The hon. member reminded the House that Bill C-120 standing in the hon. member's name was removed from the Order Paper some time ago after the subject matter thereof was referred by consent, to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. Eventually, the committee reported to the House. The committee report does refer to the hon. member's bill and submits recommendations which the hon. member suggests differ from the proposals contained in his bill.

The hon. member suggests that he has a question of privilege on two counts: first, that the committee report does not conform with certain aspects of his private bill and, second,