

*Canada Elections Act*

impressed by the contribution made by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. Although his amendment is not before us at the moment, I think it is a very useful suggestion.

I believe in the principle that a person should be a citizen in order to cast a vote in this country. None the less I am concerned, as are many members, with the thought of disenfranchising those who have grown accustomed to casting their ballot here. For that reason, I would be inclined to support the position taken by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra and if the amendment before the House is not passed, I shall certainly support the amendment to which I have referred.

I should, however, like to make one point. Clause 14 subclause (3) of the bill reads:

Every British subject other than a Canadian citizen—

I would prefer that the words "British subject" be struck out and be replaced by the word "person". I do not see any reason why we should sanctify, as it were, the term "British subject" in the act itself. The word "person" would achieve the same objective without having overtones of creating a preferential class of people in this country.

If the amendment before us now does not pass, I would urge everyone to support the amendment that the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra is waiting to move.

**Mr. Mongrain:** Mr. Chairman, I shall try to be unusually brief. I was somewhat amused a few minutes ago to hear the hon. member for Hillsborough tell us about the wisdom of our fathers. As a university professor, he must know there are a lot of young Canadians who do not believe in the wisdom of their fathers but who want to revolutionize everything. There are a lot of older Canadian citizens as well who feel there must be changes if we want to establish, once and for all, the identity of this country called Canada.

That is one of the reasons I shall vote for the amendment of the member for Matane. In my estimation, the correct procedure is to decide right now that those who are Canadian citizens have the right to vote. In a few months we can amend the Citizenship Act to provide that somebody who has lived here for a year or two years can become a Canadian citizen. In that way everybody will have the right to vote. I think the majority of Canadians have made up their minds that it is high time we had something concrete to establish our Canadian identity.

[Mr. Cafk.]

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mongrain:** I am not against all the amendments that have been proposed. There is a lot of value in them, but I think the right way to proceed is to decide now that Canadian citizens will have the right to vote and then to amend the Citizenship Act as soon as possible to lower the five-year period to 12 or 18 months. A good many hon. members spoke about discrimination. There is surely some kind of discrimination on the part of some Commonwealth countries. If I understand correctly, 26 countries belong to the Commonwealth but only eight grant this right to Canadians. Of those eight, only two are major countries, the others being very, very small countries. Moreover, among those eight countries, two will not give to Canadians the right to be a candidate. A Canadian may vote, but he may not be a candidate. I think that, indeed, constitutes some kind of discrimination and I think we should stop that once and for all.

• (5:50 p.m.)

I am sure that the majority of young Canadians—and when I speak of young Canadians I speak of those who are young at heart, I do not refer to age because some young Canadians are grey haired—are yearning for the Canadian identity to be established. This is one way of establishing it and this is one way of convincing immigrants who come here that Canadianism means something, that it is not a privilege reserved to a few but a right they will need to win by proving over a certain time that they are good Canadians. For those reasons, I support what the hon. member for Matane has moved.

I have been pleased to see this debate going forward smoothly without any racist or Jingoist overtones, such as one might witness in a debate of this kind. I will vote for the amendment of the hon. member for Matane. I respect the spirit of some of the other amendments which have been brought forward. I repeat, I think we ought to do it this way. We ought to give the right of the vote to Canadian citizens and, as early as possible, amend our Citizenship Act.

[Translation]

**Mr. Fortin:** Mr. Chairman, I intend to say a few words on the amendment moved by the hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané). I was thrilled by the speeches made by the hon. member from Matane, the hon. member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) and the hon. member