

*Citizenship*

● (1740)

In the admission of immigrants to Canada we are making a decision before the fact, and it is then, and not later, that we should decide what is and what is not acceptable to us in the way of public morality. I do not want our country to advertise itself throughout the world as a haven for perverts and deviates, and I am afraid that that is just the way it will appear if we drop that restriction.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that I agree with the proposal to drop the requirement that candidates for citizenship renounce their former citizenship before accepting their Canadian citizenship. I think that that was an unnecessary and onerous requirement and I cannot help feeling that new Canadians have often felt that they were demeaning their homelands and their former allegiances. It is not necessary to the fulfilment of a new obligation to renounce and demean a former one, and I welcome this change. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that these few flaws that I detect in the bill will be dealt with in committee.

**Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this bill before we reach the end of the day. While the bill has some good features, most of which are agreeable, there are two serious deficiencies in it.

I should like to speak on the reduction in time for the granting of citizenship being reduced from five years to three. The other point that concerns me is the time spent in this country illegally that would count toward the time required for citizenship. This I suggest, in the modern world in which we live, is a very great mistake on our part. It is obvious that under this law an alien who has been in this country illegally for six years will be automatically granted citizenship after three years, and that is the only requirement to be considered.

Any discussion on the granting of citizenship must take into account the immigration problems that are inherent in this granting of citizenship. We have heard of other countries that have been somewhat more liberal in granting citizenship, but if one examines them nearly all have other restrictions which are more severe.

Canada is one of the last countries in the world that is still allowing an influx of a relatively large number of immigrants from other countries. In the past five years we have taken in around one million immigrants and I think that any policy of citizenship has to be discussed in this light. A million people represent 5 per cent of our population.

Slowly, one by one around the world, bars are going up against immigrants. Even the United States has shown its propensity to shut out immigrants and to keep aliens beyond its borders. Indeed one of its complaints has been that Canadian immigration authorities are so lax and Canadian immigration policy so ineffective that a large number of undesirable people are using Canada as an entry into the United States.

We have just gone through the problem of the wholesale illegal entry of people in the immigration field. During the discussion in this House it was obvious that our immigra-

[Mr. Scott.]

tion policy was like Swiss cheese, so full of holes as to be ineffective. The government had to pass legislation that presumably would have some effect on stopping the illegal flow of immigrants.

There is obviously in this country a vast reservoir of people who are here illegally and who will not surface for a long time to come. I believe that this problem will become much more acute as economic slow growth increases and illegal immigrants, in one way or another, will fall into the hands of the authorities to have their cases dealt with by them. If illegal aliens present themselves for citizenship that does not in my opinion—because they have entered illegally and because they have circumvented the normal immigration channels, whether they are desirable or not—entitle them to apply their time in the country as illegal immigrants to their normal citizenship time. By coming to this country illegally they have already jumped the queue. Even if they had been accepted as immigrants they would have left in line those immigrants who look on coming to Canada as a privilege, and who line up at our overseas immigration offices in order to be processed legally and lawfully.

Surely if aliens have come to this country illegally, and certainly in many cases some of these people are active in illegal practices, their time here as an illegal alien should not count. This, I think, is one of the most ridiculous aspects of the bill, that illegal immigrants who have perhaps been indulging in criminal practices will have this time count toward their citizenship.

It has been estimated by officials of the Department of Manpower and Immigration that there are upwards of 200,000 illegal aliens in Canada. Even during the recent amnesty only 40,000 came forward. Surely there is something illogical about this bill reducing the time to be spent in Canada from five years to three years, and allowing the time spent here illegally to count as part of that requirement.

Does the government want the bill to pass merely as a political measure to enfranchise new immigrants? We know that immigrants tend to vote for the government in power at their time of entry. Is the government attempting to ensure that these new people will give it some measure of support at the next election?

Furthermore, there is no real way of knowing when an immigrant has come to this country illegally because we have only that person's word for it. If he is here illegally, obviously there is no official time that he arrived on record and there will be no official documentation as to when he came. It is going to be almost impossible to establish with any degree of certainty when the individual came to this country. He is not likely to come forward with that information.

Turning to the second part of the bill on which I wish to speak, that is, the reduction in the time spent by the immigrant in Canada from five to three years, again I must make the strongest representation that this should not occur. If citizenship means anything, surely it has to be earned. True, whether it is five years or three years, it must be arbitrary. I suggest if we are going to have any qualification period at all, if we are not just going to hand citizenship to someone the day he gets off the boat or the