

*Canada Elections Act*

Canadian citizens. What is the great difference between two years and three years? They will still have to make up their minds.

**Mr. Perrault:** I appreciate the hon. member's comment but he still has not met the situation I outlined to the House. I think that an informed person can easily obtain his citizenship in two years. But we have to remember that we have the long tradition in Canada of people who have come here in the knowledge, or understanding at least, that as British subjects they have the right to vote in Canadian elections should they achieve one year's residence. I think the educational campaign alone requires more than two years. I ask myself what would happen if we had a by-election in the next few weeks.

● (3:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Prud'homme:** I covered the point.

**Mr. Perrault:** It may be, and I may have been out of the House at the time. But we must lean over backward to accommodate people if we take this action, and I think it will take longer than two years, as has been suggested by hon. members this afternoon.

I should like to come back to the point that as yet we have not met, the basic difficulty of a number of people who simply will not have the right to vote in 1972 if we act in the undue and unseemly haste which I think is reflected in this amendment.

**Mr. Nowlan:** I am glad to participate in the debate on the amendment to clause 14(3) of Bill C-215. I agree with my colleague, the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East, that, judging from the remarks made this morning by many hon. members, albeit with sincerity, they have contributed their thoughts without really appreciating the purport of the amendment that is before the committee or of the clause that is under study. I think it has been rather refreshing to hear the exchanges back and forth across the House. It is a healthy sign, and I believe the clause should be studied further by the Committee on Procedure. Although it may take more time, the atmosphere in the committee is more appropriate in spite of the physically exhausting meetings of that committee which we have been having.

I did not intend to participate at all in this debate until I heard different hon. members contributing their views, and I started to inquire just what was under debate. I read the clause and some of the speeches that have

[Mr. Prud'homme.]

been made, and I share the view of other hon. members regarding the constructive nature of the debate. A little later I will comment on the contribution today by the hon. member for Saint-Denis. I find myself in the very refreshing position of agreeing with the remarks of the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour. I share his enthusiasm and respect his energy, but sometimes I find I cannot agree with the decisions he makes or the way he votes. However, that is the prerogative of members of this House. I may go further than the hon. gentleman, but I am glad there are members on both sides of the House, including the hon. member for Ontario who spoke earlier, who are expressing different viewpoints on this very basic clause.

I should like to point out to the House Leader that if he wants to expedite the passage of Bill C-215, some members better get their heads together to find out where we stand on clause 14 (3) as well as the amendments proposed. Since this clause touches on a pretty basic and sensitive issue, as well as an emotional issue, as was apparent from some of the speeches we heard this morning, it may be the subject of a prolonged debate.

I have listened with interest this morning to many hon. members, as I did to the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour a minute ago. He said that in Canada there are no special groups, that we are all Canadians. The hon. member for Fraser Valley East spoke with passion and conviction of his idea of Canada which I think would equal if not surpass some of the gratuitous remarks on nationalism made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, be they made in Denver or before the Canadian Club. There is no one in this chamber who has a monopoly on being a good nationalist, a good Canadian, a good mother, a good father or a good member of Parliament. We all share these things. The difference is between prayer and practice. How do you define a good Canadian or a good nationalist?

I should like to speak particularly to the hon. member for Saint-Denis and to the hon. member for Winnipeg North—I will not mention him further if he is not here—as well as to the hon. member for Roberval, who spoke before noon and whom I informed of what I was going to say. I find it strange that we in this chamber can speak of no special group, no special status, when this Parliament, in trying 100 years ago to define a Canada enshrined a certain status and rights in some of the statutes of this Parliament. I only have to refer to the Official Languages Bill.