

SPEECH BY MR. M.P.D. NAIR MOVING THE SECOND  
READING OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS  
(AMENDMENT) BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1957.

This Bill proposes amendments to the Singapore Legislative Assembly Elections Ordinance which are rendered necessary by the enactment of the Singapore Citizenship Ordinance 1957.

The present qualification of electors is laid down in Clause 5 of the Singapore Legislative Assembly Elections Ordinance part of which reads as follows:

"any person who

- (a) is a citizen of the U.K. and Colonies by virtue of the provisions of the British Nationality Act, 1948, or was born in any of the States or territories now included in the Federation of Malaya or the Colony of Sarawak or the Colony of North Borneo or the State of Brunei; and
- (b) was ordinarily resident in the Colony on the 1st day of April in any year; and
- (c) was not less than 21 years of age on the first day of July in that year,

shall be entitled to have his name entered or retained in the register of electors in that year."

Singapore is to attain the status of the State of Singapore as a self-governing territory and the Assembly will be a fully elected body when the Legislative Assembly elections under the new Constitution are held. They are expected to be held next year.

Hon. Members will recall that at its sitting in October this Assembly approved the Singapore Citizenship Ordinance - a charter by which we have achieved what we longed for for years - the creation of a status recognisable in all parts of the Commonwealth for all those who regard Singapore as their home and the object of their undivided loyalty.

Those who are citizens by birth and descent have the right to vote. The proposed amendment to Clause 5 is very significant. Thousands of our adult population who, although not born in Singapore, have been resident here for long periods and have contributed to the prosperity of Singapore and are enthusiastically becoming Singapore citizens and declaring their allegiance and loyalty to Singapore. It is important that the new status of Singapore citizenship should carry with it the right to assist in the procedure of democratic government and this Bill seeks to grant our new citizens their first democratic right - the right to vote for election of the people's representatives to sit in this House. The general purpose of this Bill, therefore, is to provide that the right to vote in Legislative Assembly elections shall be granted to citizens of Singapore - and to citizens of Singapore only.

In a self-governing Singapore it is no longer desirable to offer voting rights to those whose bodies are in Singapore but whose hearts and minds are elsewhere. If the newly-won constitution for self-government is to be implemented in the spirit in which it

was framed, it is essential that the hearts and minds of all people participating in the government of Singapore should be in Singapore itself and that their outlook and undivided loyalty should be centered here. Therefore voting rights should be accorded only to citizens of Singapore.

Clause 2 (ii): This amendment proposes that the relevant residential date shall be the 1st day of February instead of the 1st day of April. This is necessary in order that the work of preparing the registers in 1958 should be commenced as early as possible.

(iii) and (iv) are consequential to the previous amendments.

Clause 3 proposes that only persons who are or who become citizens of Singapore on or before the 1st day of February 1958 and who are resident in an electoral division on that day shall have their names included in the first register. The existing sub-sections (2) and (4) of Section 10 of the Ordinance are deleted in order to avoid delay in the completion of the registers. This simplified procedure is in conformity with that laid down in the Local Government Elections Ordinance 1957.

Clause 4 provides for the revision of the registers in each year following the year 1958.

Clause 5 repeals the Singapore Legislative Assembly (Temporary Provisions) Ordinance 1957.

In conclusion, Government hopes that all those who are eligible to become Singapore citizens will take up citizenship before the 1st February 1958 so that they will be able to exercise the democratic right of citizens to elect members of the new Legislative Assembly.

NOVEMBER 18, 1957.

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