

Dual Citizenship and Living Abroad

Introduction

This file contains two letters, one to an individual and one to an editor. Both deal with issues of multiple citizenships and citizens living abroad.

1. To Lorne Gunter

One Lorne Gunter wrote an article somewhere on the subject "Citizen Repatriation and Dual Citizenship." I responded to him with the following letter:

Thanks for your writings on these topics. I could hardly agree more. Here are some additional thoughts and experiences.

I am a Canadian citizen who spent more than 55 years abroad, 30 of them in Nigeria in the service of a Canadian corporation (church). I always regarded myself as having left Canada for a risky country by my own choice, even though working for Canadians who wanted me to go out there. In my own mind, I released Canada from any responsibility for me, should I get into trouble. Certainly, she would not be held responsible for my repatriation in case of war or any such catastrophe. I would have expected Canada to speak for me in case of imprisonment due circumstances beyond my control. After all, I was there serving Canadian interests, even if not necessarily government's.

As it turned out, there was a civil war around 1970. I was at the time stationed in an isolated place with basically no roads. As to any other communication amenities, forget them. The nearest phone was at that time some 500 miles away! This was pre-computer stuff. After a year and a half of war, a letter from the Canadian High Commissioner in Lagos finds me somehow through a PO box only 400 miles away. It assured me not to worry, since they had everything under control! Since then, I never again registered my presence with them. But neither did I hold them responsible for my safety. I had relinquished that by choosing to live and stay in a dangerous place. I had placed myself beyond their reach.

I believe that any Canadian citizen who has left Canada on his own and finds himself in trouble, is not the responsibility of anyone but himself. If he is working for a Canadian organization, then that organization is responsible for him, not the government. It is up to him to gauge whether his organization is strong enough to carry this responsibility. The government (govt) can provide repatriation services if they are assured of being repaid for their expenses, every last cent. If he is working for the Canadian govt, well, then, of course, that govt should take responsibility.

The Canadian govt repatriation of our Lebanese expats at govt expense is a govt scam of tax payers' money. Especially in case of Lebanese. I have seen them many of them operate in the Third World. They often take the local people for a ride and they are often hated by the citizens of their host countries. Some buy their way into local citizenships and exploit them for all they can.

Why do our immigration policies ignore the cultures of new immigrants or applicants for Canadian citizenship? I know: they have no guts. Political correctness. Afraid of the racist tag. And so they ignore some of the basic cultural factors and end up with problematic citizens.

I am also a Dutch citizen due to birth. Immigrated as a teenager in 1951 with my parents. I value this double citizenship for the opportunities this represents, especially now that we have the EU. I can move into any EU country, live and work there, no questions asked. I like that freedom, even though at my age (69) I am not likely to use it, apart from a month here and there.

I have made sure my children also have Dutch citizenship. And they have US as well, due to their mother's US citizenship. That makes them triple citizens. I am encouraging them, in turn, to ensure the same for our grandchildren—triple.

Why? Opportunity. They are free to move around in Canada, USA and EU. What freedom. What opportunity. Many parents with similar opportunities may shrug their shoulders and not work so hard on these provisions, thinking they or their children will never need it. In our case, we did not expect it of ourselves either, but, to our own surprise, we became a cosmopolitan family that moves around. I have worked and studied in Europe, something I had not previously foreseen. Two of my children worked temporarily in Europe—no sweat. One worked in Japan and it was much more complicated due to lack of citizenship. Another one is going to work in Kenya for four months and is leaving tomorrow.

So, multiple citizenship can mean opportunity—and that's worth a lot for an enterprising family like ours. I appreciate it.

But of what value is it to govts and nations? I would say: None. It only creates complications and is open to all kinds of abuse, as the Lebanese have openly shown us. Imagine Canada's responsibility for the many thousands of Canadians in Hong Kong should the Chinese govt decide that enough is enough for that outpost's entrepreneurial spirit! That would cost us more than a pretty penny. This potential problem has also been noticed in relation to militant Muslims who milk this situation for all its worth.

For this reason, though I am reluctant to give mine up voluntarily, I favour Canada to simply prohibit multiple citizenship. There is no advantage in it for the people of Canada, except for some individuals. It only creates false and expensive responsibilities. We should do away with it.

Again, keep up your writings on the subject.

2. Dual Citizenship¹

Between my wife and myself, our three children and four grandchildren, nine in all, we have 27 legal citizenships and legal access to 27 passports!² I have strongly encouraged my children to work hard at retaining their citizenships, both for themselves and their children, for it spells opportunity and freedom.

Yet, I think it nonsense for countries to allow multiple citizenship. While we retain ours because of the opportunities it affords, I personally do not believe *any* country benefits from such arrangements. Criminals use it as a cover. Citizens of convenience hold Canada responsible for their safety, while they contribute nothing to the country. Cohen reminds us how our fellow “Canadians” in Lebanon have abused their status at your and my great expense. I hold them in deep contempt as exploiters. 250,000 of them in Hong Kong? A financial catastrophe waiting to happen! And our government just sits there waiting for it?!

I lived abroad from 1958-2001, on three continents, with 30 years in a very unstable country.³ I experienced a civil war in the midst of which the Canadian High Commissioner miraculously managed to get a letter to us, assuring us that he had everything under control! Utter nonsense. They did not have a chance in the world to rescue us. I quit registering my presence in the country.

I learned that if I go abroad, I should take responsibility for my own decision and not force it on my fellow citizens at home. No one forced me to leave. It was my choice, my responsibility. Why should Canada be responsible for such personal decisions? If I want our government’s protection, I should stay home.

I want Canada to decide two issues:

1. *Do away with multiple citizenship.* It does her no good. It forces her to save people from the scrapes they get themselves in.
2. *Reject responsibility for citizens gone abroad,* unless employed or sponsored by a Canadian institution that is licensed to so employ Canadians. The employer is then charged all expenses for repatriation or other protective measures.

¹Letter to Editor of *VS* in reaction to Andrew Cohen’s article under the same title, 30 July/2007 (p. A7).

²Figures for 2015, the year this article is edited for placement on this website, need to be revised upward due to three more grandchildren. The two “27s” are now “36s.” These figures do not include the spouses, who would turn the “36s” into “40!” And all of it legal, except that the ramifications of current revision of relevant laws in both Canada and The Netherlands are not yet clear.

³At this point, there is a slight change of subject, though the topics are related to each other. Neither the Editor nor I detected the shift at the time. This comment is meant to pre-empt your critique!

1. Letter to Editor of *VS* in reaction to Andrew Cohen's article under the same title, 30 July/2007 (p. A7).

2. By now in 2015, the year this article is edited for placement on our website, these figures need to be amended upward since there are now seven grandchildren, which should mean 36 legal citizenships and 36 legal passports! These figures do not include the spouses, who would add four to both of them, bringing them up to "40s." But these new figures are difficult to verify at the moment, since both Canada and The Netherlands are in the process of revising the relevant laws.

3. At this point, there is a slight change of subject, though the topics are related to each other. Neither the Editor nor I detected the shift at the time. This comment is meant to pre-empt your critique!