

*Historic Sites*

Board is doing and to say that anything that we can do to show our pride in our heritage is a good act on our part.

**Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I want to add a few thoughts also, but with no regrets at extending the debate for the next few minutes. I know that the House is disposed to move this bill along and it has proceeded with a good deal of the examination of it in committee. But since the bill involves the Historic Sites and Monument Act, it also involves the whole perception of Canadian history, and like other speakers who have taken part in the debate on this bill I believe that the bill involves our history and how it is taught in our schools, which has been a pet subject of mine.

The teaching of history in our schools is not even required in some school curricula, which is a most retrograde and unfortunate situation. A student is able to go through the whole school system, at both elementary and secondary school levels, and graduate from grade 11, 12, or 13 in this province having had no real exposure to our vibrant history, the history of our country which is just as exciting and dynamic as the history of the country to the south of us. Quite understandably, we are preoccupied with Canadian culture and we have set up CRTC to define Canadian content so that we know what a Canadian is and so that when we see ourselves in the mirror we are able to recognize ourselves and find out who the devil we are.

Having been exposed to education, not as a teacher but as a member of a school board, and then having been privileged to be chairman of a school board in the west, it has never ceased to amaze me how little the Canadian student is exposed to the vital history of this land. Were he exposed more to it, it would give him some pride, in light of some of the problems which we have in this country at present. Maintaining Canadian content in our programs and trying to instil pride in our history, almost after the event, may be fine; but for it to be taught properly in the schools is much more important. A great deal of the legislation we deal with in the House involving Canadian culture is pump-priming and band-aid procedure. It does not get to the fundamentals which must be taught in our schools.

Today I flew in from Nova Scotia and walked into the House as the bells were ringing this morning. This weekend we were involved in the apple blossom festival with the Minister of National Revenue (Miss Bégin) gracing the parade by being the parade marshal and participating in a unity breakfast in which I also participated. I think it was the minister's first venture into the Annapolis Valley. Perhaps that is why I was interested in seeing this bill come forward today and hearing the parliamentary secretary's explanation.

● (1140)

I am sorry that I did not participate in the committee, because I certainly would have got into a more detailed examination of some projects in my riding. The House may be aware that my riding is Annapolis Valley, and I am being quite modest when I say it is literally the cradle of a European civilization in North America. It has the oldest continuous settlement which is still in existence. That settlement dates back to 1604. Because I was exposed to some of this over the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

weekend I am glad to have the opportunity to make these remarks.

It was a fellow called Joseph Howe, a tremendous Nova Scotian, who said something like this, "A nation which does not preserve its monuments starts to lose its soul". Considering statements such as that of over one hundred years ago, in the present context I wonder if this is not one of the reasons we try to define what our soul is. We have not paid enough attention to this. There is more than stale, dusty history: Our history is vital and active.

I do not know how many students in our country know some of the interesting things about our prime ministers. No prime minister has not had some facet of private or personal life which was just as fascinating as anything that happens south of the border. We all know the attributes of Sir John A. Macdonald. Few realize that he had a daughter who was very retarded and sick. He used to walk from this House of Commons every night to what is now the British high commission, his former home, to read to her during the supper hour. Perhaps it was as a result of her affliction and other tragedies regarding his son that Sir John A. Macdonald became a great gourmet of certain liquids. However, he was a great parliamentarian.

The fact that the home of the first prime minister of this land no longer belongs to Canada is testimony to the fact of how retarded we have been as a country. It is now the site of the British high commission. It was a beautiful house, and it still stands. I do not know if the history of that house is pointed out by guided tours. This would never happen in the United States—but it happens in Canada all the time.

The hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) is not in the chamber now, but he has been a consistent spokesman for those who want to have a federal government and the provincial governments recognize some of our historic sites. Three miles from me in my riding there was once the home of one of our prime ministers, Sir Robert Borden, but that house has been torn down. It was an original American planner home. Now the site is barren: there are now just trees and shrubs; the house is not there. At the intersection of Grand Pré there is a little plaque saying that down the road half a mile is where the house once was. When I was knee high to a grasshopper I attended the unveiling of that plaque. Henry Borden, of Brazilian extraction and a descendant of Sir Robert Borden, pulled back the veil; but even at that time, if my memory serves me correctly, the original home was still in existence.

I do not want to take up too much time, but I want to repeat what Joseph Howe said, "A nation which does not preserve its monuments starts to lose its soul". The right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) once said in a speech—and I have used this at every school at which I have spoken—that the man who does not know his history is the same as a person in the hospital who has amnesia. We do not have to become slaves of the past, but certainly an awareness of the past would help define and chart the course for the future.