

Citizenship

any perspective of this country and what citizenship means who spend so much time searching for Canada. That is just a little extra, Mr. Speaker. I suppose when I am teaching Canadian literature I can use Frederick Philip Grove and that example, but I wanted to share it with the House this afternoon.

Canada, of course, is not an exclusive London Club type of place. The words qualifying citizenship, in my humble opinion, be they ethnic, be they naturalized or not, any word that qualifies our feelings for our brothers and sisters who are citizens is demeaning. After all, this inheritance is shared. As John Kennedy said about America once, this is a land of immigrants. I had an opportunity to visit the north and learn of the settlement of the north by the movement of the Innuit people across the Bering Sea. The same applies, of course, to the Indian people. I realize that none of us can claim any special privileges about citizenship because all of us at one time or another came here from somewhere else.

An editorial which appeared in the *Windsor Star* on October 17, 1974, had two sentences which I think are valid and relevant to this debate. The editorial said:

Being a Canadian has become much more a source of pride in the past few years, particularly by comparison with other countries. We are losing our national diffidence, and it is only proper that the formalities of citizenship keep pace with the intangibles of pride and confidence.

I like that, Mr. Speaker, and I want to relate it to my hope that the granting of citizenship by our courts will continue to be a dignified and very special occasion for both the judge granting the privilege and the new citizen receiving it. As a member of parliament, I have witnessed this many times in the past. An editorial which appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on June 4, 1974, said:

It takes courage to pull up stakes, move perhaps half way around the world, and make a fresh start in an unfamiliar country. It is a gutsy kind of person who is ready to take on the daily challenge of coping with a new language, new laws and new customs for the sake of a better life for his family and himself. For Canada immigration has been more than just a source of population, it has been a supplier of a very special kind of people, generously endowed with initiative, boldness, creativity and the capacity to respond to challenge.

I hope this House feels that the comment by the *Globe and Mail* is an appropriate one to make as we discuss what I suggested earlier was an interlocking of the whole issue of immigration and citizenship. They are inextricably bound. As I said earlier, it is too bad that the bill is put forward now. It has been on the order paper since last October and is brought up now at the very moment the special joint committee is travelling across the country.

The bill is not all bad, however; there are some pluses. I take particular satisfaction in the fact that at last our men and women are treated equally. Women who lost citizenship by marrying foreign nationals under pre-1947 law can now recover their citizenship automatically. Children born abroad can derive citizenship in or out of marriage. This, of course, was the subject of one of the many recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. If I can be modest, it has been the subject matter of a private member's bill which I introduced in the last parliament. I am glad the government has responded. I think the government could have responded with a simple and amended bill—this remark applies to several other

[Mr. Fairweather.]

clauses—by virtue of which this and other anomalies could have been cleared up long ago.

● (1710)

The minister said that the old discrimination as between British subjects and immigrants from outside the Commonwealth is to be erased. He has given us an interpretation of the three-year formula. Presumably the qualifying time for the British is to be increased, and the five-year qualifying period for others—I suggest that the unpleasant word “others” should not occur in our present consideration—is to be decreased. These disparate qualifications are to be merged in the three-year term.

Many of my colleagues have raised in caucus, if I may let you in on a big secret, and in public discussion the reduction from 21 to 18 of the age for individual applications for citizenship. I suggest that the government has been very laggardly indeed about introducing this obvious provision. The provinces have long since reduced the age of majority and the Canada Elections Act did so several years ago. I think it is important for mature, adult people to be given the opportunity to make individual applications. The government's long delay in coming to grips with this problem has meant that the careers of many young men and women have been inhibited. They have not been able to engage in some of the careers enunciated by the minister in his speech.

I make the point that we all were immigrants once. I think it pertinent to quote part of a monthly pamphlet put out by the Royal Bank of Canada. I quote from the one of November, 1973. It says in part:

By becoming a Canadian citizen a person shows that he is no longer satisfied to be merely a guest in the house where he lives but that he has, in fact, become one of the family.

In primitive times, when a person sought to live in another group than his own, ceremonial rites of adoption were necessary. These rites were supposed to make the incoming individual a blood member of the new group.

Citizenship implies acceptance of a code of behaviour, but that is only the starting point. It also gives one a set of anticipations and expectations.

I, for one, hope that the anticipations and expectations of those who come to this country will always be generously met. I hope that is how those will feel who have come to Canada and wish to adopt this as their own country. Nothing in recent Canadian history has troubled me more than recent manifestations of evil, of racist statements scrawled by cowards on walls of buildings, usually at night because the perpetrators of such crimes are not brave enough to do it in daylight. This subject will be considered by the special committee. I, personally, hope that this whole aspect, this wound on the fabric of Canada, will not be allowed to fester and that our federal and provincial governments will meet it head on.

I wish to read another passage into the record. It is by John Stuart Mill. This quotation is also contained in the monthly letter of the Royal Bank, that most farsighted Nova Scotia bank which is Halifax-based. It reads in part:

John Stuart Mill, philosopher and economist, wrote in his essay on liberty: “The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.”