

Canadian Citizenship Act

er are the sole phenomena that give significance to this spinning hunk of rock in space that we all inhabit.

You can keep your dusty piece of paper and do with it what you like, Mr. Speaker, but as for me I will keep on swearing my allegiance to the Canadian Crown.

Hon. Hugh John Flemming (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, I find myself compelled to offer a few remarks in connection with this bill. I begin by saying that I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. member who has just spoken. I do vary, however, from his approach to the matter because he said I believe—I hope I am quoting him accurately—that his approach was not sentimental. I am willing to acknowledge that my approach to the matter is sentimental, but I give anybody the right not to agree totally with me unless it happens to suit him and he has the same feeling.

I would point out that in taking an oath of allegiance we are really swearing allegiance to a person, but in this case that person happens to symbolize something. In the case of a Canadian who swears the oath of allegiance to the Queen, as we all have, he does so because she stands for the Parliament of Canada; she is part of the Parliament of Canada which consists of the Queen, the Senate and the House of Commons. We swear the oath of allegiance to her as a living person, one who symbolizes the things for which I believe we all stand.

Those who fought in two world wars and who have contributed tremendously to the development of our country swore an oath of allegiance to the Queen because she symbolizes the love of liberty; she symbolizes those things for which people from all over this great country of ours were willing to risk their lives. Personally, I think she is a great woman, a great person, and I love her. I am fond of her and I have no hesitation in saying that. But I do not necessarily try to inflict that feeling on other members of the House if they do not have it. However, what I do say is that you cannot swear allegiance to a constitution, to a piece of paper. There is nothing to a piece of paper; it is just something you can scribble on and throw into a waste paper basket. The explanatory note to this bill reads:

• (1750)

Under the present oath of allegiance the applicant for citizenship swears allegiance to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors. This bill would make the oath more meaningful—

I do not agree that it would make the oath more meaningful. Whoever wrote those words should never have done so. It does not make the oath more meaningful to swear to the constitution, a piece of paper. That, to me, is ridiculous. The hon. member talked about what we should do by lawful means. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more precious to people than what we call justice. There is no justice as great in the world, in my estimation, as British justice. Anybody who knows anything agrees with that.

Because she happens to be Queen of Great Britain does not necessarily mean that she cannot be Queen of Canada. I think it is a very fine thing that we have such a wonderful person to symbolize our great country. Mr. Speaker, the Queen is the symbol of something with which we can all agree. We in this House have our differences and argue our points back and forth. But the

[Mr. Osler.]

minute we get outside this chamber, and even in it, the thing we all agree on is the symbol of the Queen. There is no difference between us so far as the Queen is concerned. We are all for the Queen because she stands for something. Like the old saying, unless you stand for something you fall for anything. That could be so.

In my opinion it is a great thing to have a person whom we all agree is a wonderful symbol of a wonderful institution and that, of course, is Canada in our case. It may be Britain in the case of people who live there, but that does not make it any less attractive, potent, desirable and precious for the people of Canada.

It would be a terrible thing if this bill were to pass. In the first place, it would not be fair to the people of Canada because no change of this nature should be made without at least a vote of two-thirds of the members of this House or of the people of Canada: it is too serious a matter. People stand up here day after day and talk about the greatness of our country. We have gone along for 100 years with this oath of allegiance and apparently we all agree we have done pretty well, that we have made great progress as a country. Now some people want to change this. I am always in favour of change provided the change brings about improvement. That is the acid test of the desirability of change, to bring about improvement. The change suggested in this bill would be a tragedy; it would be no improvement and it would be a terrible thing to do.

So I say that for sentimental reasons, if you like, but also because she is a part of the Parliament of Canada, no Canadian need be ashamed to take the oath of allegiance to the Queen. So far as I am concerned, I am very proud of it. But even if you are not and do not have the kind of feeling that I have, you still can feel that with this oath of allegiance our country has done pretty well. We have lasted over 100 years and have made great progress. Those who contributed to our heritage and fought the battles of this country took the present oath. They were glad to take it. There were no complaints from those gentlemen when they risked their lives for this country. They did not question the kind of oath they took. They did not ask to take an oath to the constitution.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, this change would be a terrible mistake. I cannot express myself in strong enough language. And hon. members cannot even agree on the language; they are already fighting about the language. The hon. member who proposed the bill put in certain language and another hon. member who supported the bill said that that language should be changed. Before they even get it through the House they have started to fight about the language. The whole situation is ridiculous. Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to vote against the bill if I get the opportunity.

Mr. Grant Deachman (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-18 would change the oath of allegiance essentially by eliminating the reference to the monarch and substituting therefor "allegiance to Canada and the Canadian constitution". Most hon. members who have spoken on this bill during the last hour—and there have been quite a number of short speeches—have said that we are a constitutional monarchy. Certainly this party and this government have no mandate from the people to accept anything except our position as a constitutional monarchy, and this