

citizenship: first, the requirements an applicant must meet to become a citizen and, second, the obligations inherent in the status of citizen—and this will certainly be the focus of discussions.

[*English*]

Although marital status is not an enumerated ground under Section 15 of the Charter, every human rights code in Canada prohibits discrimination on the basis of marital status at least with respect to employment. Some of the areas of distinction that may be of concern will include equality rights in relationship to income tax, old age security, remarriage and immigration.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I say that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms must be interpreted in the light of what Canadians expect from their society. I am certain that deep feelings will be aroused by some of the questions which will be asked and some of the answers that will be sought.

The Government has the responsibility for making laws and policies. However, individual Canadians have a fundamental role in this process. So I invite all Canadians to take advantage of the opportunity to voice their opinions. It is a forum which reflects the heart of the Charter, giving Canadians the power to help shape the laws that they want and need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clinch: Today, governments must face the challenge of providing leadership in the continuing struggle to achieve equality in this country. While the courts will play a significant role in the protection of rights, it is the responsibility of the governments of this country, along with all citizens, to promote the goal of equality. If equality is not to remain merely an abstract principle, the guarantees in Section 15 must be seen as a motivating force for governments to act.

Multiculturalism has become a recognized principle in our society and any definition of equality must encompass this reality.

[*Translation*]

We have to make sure that equality as advocated means something; no one should be denied opportunities for reasons which have nothing to do with his or her abilities.

[*English*]

The parliamentary committee represents an opportunity for Canadians to put forward their equality claims in a forum where they can contribute to legislative change. This committee offers Canadians a chance to help legislators make changes they want consistent with the Charter. By ensuring the availability of this forum, government policy choices will be made with the confidence that all claims have been heard and all claims have been assessed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments?

Statute Law Amendment Act

We shall now resume debate. The Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria).

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate. I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. Clinch) on his maiden speech today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boudria: I am sure I speak for all Hon. Members when I say that we certainly hope the Member for Gloucester will participate on a daily basis in speeches, questioning the Government and ensuring that this Government always acts in the best interests of the constituents of the riding of Gloucester, because we know they are counting on him to use those good words on their behalf. We will be here to remind the Hon. Member that he must do that now that he has made his maiden speech.

We are dealing with a very important issue. As all Members know, it is almost four years since we started discussing it. We have passed the time for consultation. This is now the time for action. I believe that all representation has been made. I am sure the people who came to speak to the committee a number of years ago were not under the impression that they would have to do their work twice, that they would have to repeat everything again through a second series of consultations with this Government.

I must take some objection to some of the words the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) used yesterday. He accused a number of Hon. Members yesterday of not being here. To use his own words, he said: "There are no members of the rat pack in the House".

Mr. Kaplan: Shame.

Mr. Boudria: I am not the one who will say today that there are no members of the dense pack in this House. I will leave it at that. However, when we are discussing the Charter of Rights, one would not think that the Minister of Justice would be absent from this House for five minutes.

Mr. Nunziata: He left right after his speech.

Mr. Boudria: I cannot say that he left right after his speech yesterday, Mr. Speaker, but I am sure he would want to be here for the rest of the deliberations on this very important issue. In the event the Minister does not show up, we hope that this House will be blessed with the presence of a number of Cabinet Ministers who will participate in this debate and listen to what Hon. Members have to say. Unfortunately, at the present time there is only one such Cabinet Minister in the House.

Mr. Cadieux: Where is the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner)?

Mr. Boudria: The changes we have seen in this legislation are purely cosmetic. We are talking about amending 50 pieces of legislation. I think that is getting carried away a little. For