

Private Members' Business

maturity and understanding to know what kind of head of state we want. But he or she will be a Canadian.

Are we opposed to having had as the third Canadian Governor General Mr. Vincent Massey who served us so well with distinction? Are we afraid to recall the graciousness of Vanier or the extraordinary good talent of Michener? What about Jules Léger who had a bad heart condition but was a remarkable Canadian ambassador? Then there was his successor, Ed Schreyer; that magnificent couple who we buried in the same year, the Sauvés; and the one we have at the moment who is a Canadian, Ramon Hnatyshyn.

In 1964-65 his gracious father who was a senator opposed the Canadian flag. Today our Governor General is happy to carry the flag of Canada while his father, Senator Hnatyshyn, opposed the Canadian flag. That shows people like me who are getting older that we must respect the past but we must build a new identity. This new identity is called Canada, an institution that is easy to sell to people. We should have pride because as I keep saying Canada is probably one of the last lights of hope.

[Translation]

It is a light of hope, and I say it in French, because what I say in English about Canada I can repeat in French in Quebec and everywhere. If people do not like what Prud'homme says when he talks about Canada, well, there is democracy and they can vote me out.

But I believe that Canada, my dear friend, especially you—and that is the parliamentary system; I can talk as I am doing with the distinguished member for Parry Sound—Muskoka—

[English]

We should try to convince each other that we cannot cry over the past. We must be part of the future—

[Translation]

—because Canada may be the future for suffering humanity, searching for a glimmer of hope. Canada, despite all our problems and divisions, represents that. That is Canada. Part of that is showing new Canadians—

[English]

—new people in school who have come here from all over the world. When they see the Queen on a bill they do not think of the Queen of Canada. They think of the Queen, gracious as she is, but the Queen of Great Britain. When they see a five-dollar bill they have to ask, because they do not teach much history in school, who is Laurier? Who is Borden? Who is Mackenzie King?

In my humble estimation this is the meaning of the bill before all of us by my hon. friend and colleagues for our reflection. It will not pass today, but if we do not debate this issue we will not have a Canada that evolves and becomes an example of acceptance and tolerance of change for the rest of humanity.

I would hope to pursue the discussion, especially with a very distinguished friend of mine, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, on all issues people who believe strongly can come at these things from different points of view.

I can tell the hon. member who brought this matter forward about my experience with citizenship court. I have attended for about eight years and I can say with all honesty that I have not had one complaint about the oath of allegiance. I do not remember one individual complaining.

In fact in my discussions with them there was joy for the people who took the oath of allegiance because it does include not only an oath of allegiance to the head of state but to the laws and to this country. There was complete joy.

On July 1, I am asked as the member of Parliament to go through with people, as I guess most members of Parliament are, the reaffirmation of citizenship. Sometimes there are as many as 5,000 to 6,000 people. I can again say with all honesty that I have not had any complaints. Nobody has come to me and said I object to the wording of it.

I say to the hon. member that once one raises some of these matters they do have the opposite effect. The central premise among other things was that new people to the country do not understand about this. I would disagree with that. I have asked them, because this was introduced a couple of years ago, whether they knew when they came to Canada that we had a history that