

Canada to issue, on behalf of the Canadian community, a gentle invitation to citizenship.

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, every once in a while the purpose of a bill causes us to stand back and look at ourselves as a people. As to what citizenship really means, people will of course have different perceptions because of their differing experiences in Canada. The other day there was a seminar on, of all subjects, the governability of democracy. An assessment made by some of those who participated was that part of the problem about democracy and the fact that the question would even be raised was that some of the essential components are missing; that is, what I call a sense of purpose, a public philosophy, and if I can add one of my own, a sense of what citizenship entails. Indeed it is, as the minister said, a matter of right, with qualifications, by the statute but of course there are also complementary privileges and responsibilities.

I suppose I have the same difficulty speaking on an issue like this as most Canadians. Up to now we have been somewhat uncomfortable about defining what we mean by patriotism. To me, citizenship is precious. It is something which must be nurtured, valued and never cheapened. I have been reflecting, as I look at this bill, on some of the service rendered to Canada by our colleague, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). Of course history will have many things to say about this, but for my part as a Progressive Conservative it seems that the contribution the right hon. gentleman made to parliament and to the democratic process was that he substantially broadened the base of the party of which I have the privilege of being part.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: He made this party, the party I am speaking for today in this debate, more representative. Therefore, the corollary is that he improved the democratic process and broadened our citizenship. I remember the days of the debate on the Bill of Rights. Those of us who were brought up in the common law experience heard it repeated many times by our legal brethren that of course there was no need for a statute to embody these rights; we had always enjoyed them. We who were used to the British tradition had always enjoyed them, and the legislative enactment was merely puffery or surplus. Of course, the right hon. gentleman and the government of the day knew that for many Canadians who were not brought up in this tradition it was vital to have a code of rights, something for them to look to. So I want to say, as we deal with the broad principle of this bill, that citizenship and the whole matter of how we respond to it, of course, has different perceptions and different meanings depending upon our backgrounds.

The minister was good enough to say that he could not stay for my speech because of another engagement, but I have several things to say about the bill. I think that citizenship and immigration are linked. Whether they are linked now by statute or not, they are in the minds of most Canadians. After all, not so very long ago citizenship and immigration were the responsibility of one minister. It seems to me an anomalous situation that we should be debating Bill C-20 its whole purpose being citizenship, at

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the very time a special joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons is going across the country gathering information on what the public feels about our immigration policy.

I have spoken to many of my colleagues who have had the privilege of being on this committee and hearing some of the representations, and in most cases no differentiation is made between citizenship and immigration. I suggest that it is both insensitive and bordering on contempt for the special joint committee to be debating this bill at the very moment the committee makes its progress across the country.

● (1700)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: I added in my notes that both these adjectives are not a rare characteristic of this government.

There are a couple of other things that I want to say, Mr. Speaker. One is that I think the provisions for allowing time in Canada—if one is in Canada illegally—to count is not helpful or, to use the minister's adjective, not a good liberal principle, with a small "l". Secondly, I think some of the comments made when the bill was introduced many months ago, that the whole citizenship court process may be speeded up can, if not carefully watched by the minister and his department, cheapen the granting of that very right and could be in danger of making the whole process like that of a sausage factory. None of us wishes this, and I want to enter a very special caveat—that whatever should be the future of this bill, one result should not be a sort of night court routine proceedings where people run up, sign the book and go on their way. Citizenship is precious, and cannot, and should not, be cheapened. It should transfuse our country and renew our country; I am certain that citizenship has immeasurably strengthened our country.

The minister has mentioned the discretion that he will enjoy and that cabinet will enjoy. I say to him with great respect that this is going to result in endless trouble for him. I will not count myself out, if I should be here, as one of those members who would wish to put pressure on the minister to exercise discretion. I have watched many ministers of citizenship during my 13 years in this House, and I think that at times the pressure upon them must have been intolerable because of this discretion. As a somewhat old-fashioned lawyer member of parliament, I would rather have jurisprudence than discretion governing the grant of citizenship. I prefer jurisprudence and an appeal procedure to a rather loosely-drawn system of discretion.

Mr. Stanfield: Even liberal.

Mr. Fairweather: Even liberal, as my leader says. As I mentioned earlier, our views on citizenship will differ. Our search for it has taken many forms in our literature. By a curious paradox, one of the most eloquent searches is in a book by a Canadian, Frederick Philip Grove, who I believe used to be at the University of Brandon. He wrote a book called "In Search of America" at a time when nationalism was not as rampant as it is at the present time. He reminded us that we should not spend so much time searching for our country because, after all, it is all about us. It is really the sightless or those who do not have