

Statue of Monarch

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in contributing to this debate, the subject of which was put forward by the Hon. Member for Nepean—Carleton (Mr. Tupper), that a statue be erected in honour of Queen Elizabeth II.

I am glad the New Democratic Party has given its enthusiastic support. I think somewhere in that 10 minutes speech I did hear a few sentences referring to the Queen. It was nice to hear a rousing endorsement of the motion. I would agree with the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) that there ought to be a statue erected in honour of Lester Pearson, former Prime Minister of Canada. I think that is overdue and I look forward to the day when that mission is accomplished.

I am pleased the Hon. Member from Nepean—Carleton has presented this motion to the House. I think the monarchy is a very important institution for Canada. I would like to mention three reasons that I think this is a timely and important motion to bring before us. First, the monarchy is important to us because it provides continuity in a world of constant change and increasingly accelerated change. The monarchy gives continuity. If we reflect on what the Royal Family has done to provide stability through its continuity in times of flux and crisis, we have to be very grateful to this great institution and those who have been kings and queens of the United Kingdom and of Canada throughout the centuries.

● (1740)

Let us think for a moment of what King George VI experienced in his relatively short reign of about 18 years. When he came to the throne, it was partly to his surprise. Then came a time of upheaval when fascist armies were forming in Europe and there was a great deal of concern throughout the world about the future of the world. The King was faced with the coming of World War II, and those of my generation at least remember the words of comfort he spoke to the entire Commonwealth and indeed to the entire world when he gave his New Year's message, "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year". That provided much solace to the world at the time.

There were changes in government going on in the United Kingdom at that time. The government went from the coalition Government of Winston Churchill to the Labour Government of Clement Attlee and then back to the Government of Winston Churchill. Throughout those years, even though King George VI was not in good health, he provided not only the United Kingdom but the Commonwealth and indeed the world with a sense of stability. While there was change, indeed there was the stability that the Royal Family and monarchy provided to the world.

The same thing has been true of our monarch today, Elizabeth II. When she came to the throne in 1952, the world seemed to be fairly stable, but it was not many years after that

that there was the Suez crisis, the Hungarian Uprising and the Korean conflict. All of those tensions were before us, and again there were changes in government in the United Kingdom. Yet Elizabeth II provided the continuity which gave comfort to the people of the United Kingdom as well as the people of the Commonwealth.

The monarchy is important because it provides continuity in a world of change. One must reflect only on the events that overtook those colonial countries that grew out of the anti-colonial movement of the 1960s. In the freshness of their sense of democracy and in their zeal for total independence, they thought it would be fashionable to become republics. One cannot help but wonder whether they were not impoverished by their too severe ties to a monarchy and would have been enriched and had found greater stability had they not maintained closer ties with the monarchy and become parliamentary democracies rather than republican democracies.

The first reason we honour the monarchy in Canada is that it provides continuity. Second, it provides us with a sense of family. It is easy enough in our world of legislation and Constitution to think that all differences are settled by law and by litigation. We are becoming an increasingly litigious society, but the monarchy reminds us of the fact that many of our tensions are best resolved not by litigation, not by confrontation, but through relationships. The monarchy has become a unifying symbol within the Commonwealth. It brings people of different views, of different socio-economic groupings, and of different heritages together. It allows us to solve problems through relations.

Let us think of the Lancaster House agreement regarding Zimbabwe. That could have been accomplished by fiat, but it was accomplished because of a relationship that existed between the United Kingdom through the monarchy and Zimbabwe. Let us think of the latest Commonwealth Conference we hosted in Vancouver and which the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) conducted so ably. Troubles were occurring in Fiji at that time, but the conference sensed the ties of its relationship.

Forty countries with different forms of government and different heritages came together. Because the monarchy was represented at the conference, a familial relationship existed there, a relationship which brought the countries together in a way that they could not have been brought together had it been simply a constitutional or legal conference.

The monarchy is important to us because it represents a sense of family, togetherness and belonging among those people who have the heritage of a relationship with the United Kingdom.

Finally, the monarchy is important to us at this time because of the contribution our present monarch, Elizabeth II, has made not only to the entire Commonwealth but particularly to Canada. She has visited our country at least 12 times and probably more. I count 12 times and I may have missed several. She has visited Canada more often than any other