

Private Members' Business

Also coming to mind are the countless parents who selflessly help run recreational sporting leagues. They coach children's teams and drive their children to practices and games. Of course, we cannot overlook those millions of Canadians from all walks of life who volunteer their time to work for organizations that provide much needed services in their communities. These are only a few of the concrete expressions of commitment to Canadian society that represent good citizenship.

Active participation in the life of one's community displays the intent of individual Canadians to make their neighbourhoods and their country a place where everyone can develop and make a contribution as an equal and full partner.

It also makes Canada a place where everyone can express their differences openly. Frankly, such participation in my opinion is what makes us feel more Canadian. Such participation gives us all a sense of belonging to our country.

In very real terms it is like being a member of a family where everyone takes part in helping the household run smoothly. The more committed the family members are the more they feel at home. I believe the same can be said of Canadian citizenship.

Part of the commitment to the family we call Canada is the acceptance of our multicultural heritage, including the heritage that comes from Canada's creation as a constitutional monarchy. Changing the oath of citizenship might be construed as a denial of an important aspect of Canadian heritage, a part of our heritage that I might add of which I am very proud and attached to. I most certainly know that I am not alone.

There are some members of the House who took the oath of citizenship when they became citizens. They accepted the oath for what it is, a symbolic gesture that mirrors part of the rich heritage of our great nation, Canada.

Every member of this Chamber has taken an oath of allegiance. Similarly, every member appointed to the Senate has taken an oath of allegiance. What they all have in common is that they swear or affirm allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

In Bill C-285 we have the anomaly of a private member seeking to alter the oath of citizenship that now calls on new Canadians to swear or affirm allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the Queen of Canada.

Mr. Justice Royal of the Federal Court of Appeal stated in a ruling in January 1992 and I quote:

It is in my view quite proper for Parliament to require persons wishing to become Canadian citizens that they swear and affirm their loyalty to the head of state. That the head of state should be found in the person of Her Majesty the Queen might be a matter of debate but it is nevertheless as much a part of our constitutional framework as are provisions of our charter.

Justice Royal went on further to say and again I quote:

Furthermore, the personified symbol of Her Majesty as head of state is not, in terms of our long constitutional heritage, a latter-day invention of some imaginative or manipulative spinner of tales but the result of constantly evolving constitutional principles which are cloaked in constitutional conventions in the United Kingdom and partly codified, in Canada, in the Constitution Act, 1982. The head of state as Her Majesty as so defined is the very embodiment of the freedoms and liberties which the applicant has inherited and which he now enjoys in a legal sense. The head of state legitimizes the laws of Canada which in concrete terms provide for the peace, order and the good government of its citizens.

Although I have considerable respect for the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, given the facts as I have previously enumerated and coupled with a learned legal opinion of a well-respected Canadian jurist, I cannot in all conscience support the amendment being sought to the Citizenship Act.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Madam Speaker, I think that I will make my main statement and Quebecers will understand that I intend to speak about this subject that concerns us, namely the oath of allegiance for new citizens, and I would prefer to do so today in English, for reasons which are quite obvious, I think, because that is where we must direct all our efforts at convincing.

[*English*]

I was in my office when I saw my hon. friend and colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce raise this issue. I listened with great care to the sentiments expressed by our colleagues from Surrey North and Kitchener. No one knows how much I respect the views of my very old friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka.