

a good sound reason and a good solid belief in a status which we know to be valuable, and valuable to Canada.

So I say, Mr. Chairman, that speakers on this side of the house have laid bare all the pretences and strawmen set up by the Secretary of State. I want to give now what I believe to be the real reason why the minister insists that this provision be kept in the bill and the amendment not accepted. That real reason has been stated to-night by the hon. member for Montmagny-L'Islet. He made the following statements on two occasions. He said, "Why should not British subjects be treated as aliens?"

Mr. MacNICOL: Shame.

Mr. MERRITT: And again, when somebody raised the question of the knowledge that British subjects held of democratic rights, he said, "What about Americans?" If the hon. member for Montmagny-L'Islet is giving voice to beliefs held by any hon. members other than himself—and I have reason to believe, after all I have heard in this chamber, that that may be so—I wish to say that I believe the minister has listened to these arguments, and that is why the amendment is not being accepted. I say to him that he has heard the roar of the train with the hot-box as he lay dozing away in the country, and because of that roar he has failed to notice the steady murmurings of the countryside.

An hon. MEMBER: That is complicated.

Mr. MERRITT: Hon. members laugh; they do not understand what I mean. I will make it too clear for them. I will simply say that he has listened to a vocal minority and he has missed the clear feeling of the majority of people in this country. I say this too, that he has overbid the middle position in this country. We on this side of the house who believe in the status of a British subject follow the principles it upholds. We believe in evolution. We believe in freedom. I said the other day in the house that the very reason I am proud of being a British subject and that I want to remain so, is that I am perfectly free if I have that status. So that we shall go all the way in compromise with other Canadians to meet their views so long as that process is evolution; but when it becomes retrogression and when it cuts in on rights that we hold to our hearts as dearly as they hold their feelings, then we must stop; we cannot agree with views of that kind, and Canadian unity is not to be built upon that kind of foundation.

[Mr. Merritt.]

I am all for building up complete Canadianism. I am all for enlarging the status of the Canadian citizen. But that must be done and that can be done without derogating from another right which I also hold dearly. There is no reason why these rights should clash. There is no reason for this difference of views; there is nothing in it at all. A Canadian who is a British subject cannot rest content if his Canadianism is incomplete. There need be no clash, unless you want to torture yourselves over words.

I have said some things earlier in this debate upon the value of the status we are toying with so lightly and paying lip-service to, but that we are not upholding. I just wish very shortly to repeat them in principle.

The value of the status of a British subject and of the British commonwealth of nations is that, in time of trouble, although we differ often in good times, we can sink our differences and be as one to face that trouble. Another great value to us all is that it enables us to enter into negotiations with another empire country in a spirit of mutual trust, which you could not do with a foreign country. You cannot be sure of a foreign country; you can be sure that though your brother-country may disagree with you, it will never take advantage of you or knife you in the back. Finally, the status of a British subject is the status of freedom itself.

Let us talk for one second about change in status. We are British subjects; we are free; we can change our status any time we want to. So that I say yes, if your change is based on a sound principle of evolution I am with you to change it; but if your change is based on a misconception of the status, on an inferiority complex or something of that nature, if your Canadianism is so lukewarm that you doubt it when it is allied to citizenship in the British empire, if that is the motivating cause of the desire to change, then I say no; I am not with you. In this case I say that that is the motivating cause.

Canada has in this post-war world a new role and a big role. We talk a great deal, and rightly, of our new and greater place in the world. Canada, therefore, has the responsibility which goes with that power. It has a responsibility now in the task of evolving this status of a British subject and of the British commonwealth of nations. What Canada does in connection with the status she is doing not only for Canada; she is setting an example, as the Secretary of State has already said, to the British peoples in all parts of the world. Although this bill will not affect me at all,