

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, I think there is no discretion vested in the minister in this respect, although I must say I am sure my learned colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration will want to consider the matter further. However, as to the purport of the decision itself, I know the house will agree that as a member of the executive it would not be proper for me to comment on the propriety or otherwise of the interpretation given to the statute by the judge concerned.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): For the benefit of those of us who are not legal experts, was the minister suggesting that there was any other reason but the religious attitude of the applicant which led the judge to make the decision he did?

Mr. Favreau: If I left that impression, Mr. Speaker, I must correct it, because I did not say there was necessarily any other reason than this one. All I said was that on the basis of that finding the judge came to the conclusion that in his opinion the applicant could not be said to be of good character within the meaning of the act; and I repeat, although I have my own personal and firm opinion as to the legal import of the section, that it would be improper for me to comment on its particular application in this particular case.

Mr. Howe (Hamilton South): Could the personal opinion of the judge not have been influenced by the atheistic feelings of the applicant in question?

Mr. Reid Scott (Danforth): Mr. Speaker, I must confess I cannot quite follow the minister's explanation. Is he telling us that although in his opinion the affirmation section should have no bearing on the ability of these people to receive citizenship, notwithstanding his view and notwithstanding the fact that a grave injustice may have been done to the individuals in question, there is absolutely no redress within the jurisdiction of the minister?

Mr. Favreau: All I said was that I do not think it would be proper for me to comment on the actual decision made by the citizenship court in this particular case. However, I said—and I know he agrees with this—that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration will want to reconsider the matter and be advised thereon. I added that aside from the ministry—or at least I implied this—if there was any action that the person

[Mr. Howe (Hamilton South).]

concerned wanted to take to have the purport of the section tested, there are surely judicial remedies such as *certiorari*. This is aside from the possibility of the minister giving further consideration to the matter.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Under the bill of rights isn't a person entitled to have whatever belief he wants to have? Isn't he entitled to hold whatever religious view he cares to have; and whether he is an atheist or an agnostic does not detrimentally affect his character within the meaning of the citizenship act.

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it quite clear that I have not agreed or disagreed with the decision itself. As to the application of the bill of rights, I suppose the right hon. gentleman will have noted that what it purports to protect is the freedom of religion. It is a moot question as to whether under the bill of rights—I do not say under the decision of the court—the freedom not to have a religion is protected.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh?

Mr. Howe (Hamilton South): Does this mean that a person only comes under the bill of rights after he has gained his citizenship?

ARTS, LETTERS AND SCIENCES**REQUEST FOR INTERIM REPORT BY ROYAL COMMISSION**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Barry Mather (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I have a short question which I should like to ask the Prime Minister. I wonder whether he can give the house any indication when we may expect an interim report from the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the commission in question hopes to make an interim report before the end of the year, but I will make inquiries to see if I can get more definite information.

HOUSING**VANCOUVER—POSSIBLE EVICTIONS FROM VETERANS HOUSING PROJECT**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Arnold Webster (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Postmaster General. In view of the fact that a large number of veterans in the Fraserview