

Citizenship

his application. This told me that this particular judge, Judge Pringle, was doing his job as a judge of the citizenship court. He was making sure that these people knew what they were getting into, and that they knew they had some responsibility to become acquainted with the country to which they were asking to be admitted as citizens. After five years this particular applicant was not able to satisfy that judge. With the period of three years such a situation could be even worse.

I believe it is unjust to lower the period from five years to three years. I think the applicants will treasure their citizenship more if it is a little more difficult to obtain. When this bill goes to the committee the committee will have a great deal of work to do to make it meaningful. Many questions which have been raised in this debate will have to be answered. I look forward to the proceedings in the committee and to what the minister will have to say when he replies.

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I thought perhaps I should rise at this time so that members of the House would know that the Mr. Towers who passed away today was not the member for Red Deer, even though he had the same initials. I refer to Mr. Graham Towers, who was Governor of the Bank of Canada when it was first instituted, and who held that position for some years. I am sure everyone feels a great deal of sympathy for his survivors and would like to pay a tribute to him for the contribution he made to Canada.

● (2100)

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to dwell for a moment on the point that the great depression of the 1930's came about because of lack of protection from an institution such as the Bank of Canada. The Bank of Canada itself was instituted under prime minister R. B. Bennett. The reason that corporation was established was to protect Canada forever from recessions of that nature. I am sure there are some of us in the House today who remember well the financial crash in 1929. I hope that nothing like that will ever happen to Canadians again. I am sure that Mr. Graham Towers, in spite of governments, has instilled in the hearts of Canadian people a desire to protect themselves from a depression such as we had in the 1930's. I am sure that all members of the House agree with me when I say that we are all saddened by his passing.

Today we are dealing with a very important bill because, after all, citizenship is one of the greatest benefits we have to offer to those who come to our country to make their home. Sometimes I think that we as a people have a tendency to take things too lightly. If something comes easily, we do not appreciate its value.

Many of us sitting in the House today can trace our ancestors back over 100 years and we appreciate what these people have done for us. They have set the stage for the benefits we are now enjoying. One of the things which we have to be particularly careful about is that we do not take any of these privileges for granted. It is so easy to have all these benefits slip away, in which case we will not be able to do those things for those about us, as Canadian citizens that we are privileged to do at present.

[Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand).]

Actually, proper citizenship builds the country, and pride of citizenship is probably one of the greatest things that can be instilled within the human being. All too often we have a tendency to feel that the country or the world owes us a living. This is one of the greatest mistakes that anyone can make. In fact instead of asking what the world can give us, we should ask what we can give to the world. In like manner we can ask as Canadians what Canada will do for us. What we should ask is what we can do for Canada. One of the most important things we have to realize as citizens of this country is that we all have a contribution to make to our country and to our heritage. We must not take this too lightly.

I rise to speak in this debate because I believe that when you see something happening with which you do not agree, perhaps some time in the future people may ask you why you allowed this to happen and where you were. Certainly I think it would be very unfortunate for a member of parliament to answer that he was there but did not say anything. That is why I rise to speak now, because I want to try to instill in those about me, and those who may read the words of wisdom that have been expressed in the debate today, a spirit of Canadianism, a spirit which will carry us well into the future.

I am concerned about one aspect of this bill, that is the provision under which an individual who is in this country illegally can use half of the time he spent here toward the period that is required for his acquisition of Canadian citizenship. I think that is wrong because, first of all, that person is in this country illegally, so why in the world should we as Canadians condone that which is illegal? I think it only depreciates the worth of Canadian citizenship. I do not think we can afford to condone that which is wrong. Certainly it must be wrong, or why should we say that a person is in the country illegally? Therefore it is wrong, and it must be considered so. We are entirely wrong in agreeing with that provision in the bill, and certainly I wish to voice my disapproval of it. I do not want to have any part of it whatsoever.

Second, there is possibly a misconception to a certain degree concerning what Canada has to offer to people in other parts of the world. I believe that perhaps we have misled them to a degree and they might feel that this is a land of milk and honey. We should tell these people when they want to immigrate to Canada that we expect them to become good citizens because that is the only way in which an individual can justify his existence here and give his utmost to the land in which he lives. When immigrants come here we must be assured that they will be happy.

Just recently I was in communication with a family that had come to Canada under the illusion that everything was hunky-dory. The man, his wife and children stayed here for awhile, but eventually he decided that Canada has nothing to offer him, so he left. I think we must be honest with these people who immigrate to our country and we must tell them that we expect them to become good citizens. We must do this for our personal benefit as well as theirs. To a degree, all people are selfish—but I think we must be careful that they be good citizens and that they will enjoy living in Canada.

After reading some of the headlines which appear in the newspapers these days I sometimes wonder if Canada has that much more to offer other people than perhaps they