

standard of excellence and esteem without let or hindrance from established customs or the exigencies of government. We know perfectly well that titular honours cannot fittingly be bestowed on people who are too poor to receive them. The consequence is that for the simple virtues of everyday life there have been exchanged what we may euphoniouly call the more splendid and showy virtues. I do not think that that is at all desirable, because if there is any class of life that we ought to wish to raise to a high level it is that class which in itself and in its immediate surroundings is deprived of wealth and opportunity. From those who have great means, great wealth, great abilities and good health, much is to be expected, and accordingly to them not much should be awarded. But those people who have poor health, little or no wealth, who live in squalor; who are in a condition, perhaps, of semi-starvation; those people, as I myself know to be the case in many instances, are willing to conform to a lofty standard of virtue, and they demand our recognition. These, we should not pass by.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I have only to say that whatever may be the desirability of the people's representatives bestowing honours upon themselves or recommending themselves for honours; when we see men contemplating their own distinction with such equanimity as to enable them to pin upon their breasts the orders typifying that distinction, we must come to the conclusion that they have gone far past the realization of the basic virtue which should be at the bottom of all our actions.

Hon. GEORGE E. FOSTER (Minister of Trade and Commerce): I was waiting for my hon. friend the Minister of Justice to take up the constitutional side of this matter, upon which I am possibly not so strong as I might be. Aside from the constitutional aspect of the question, there is, I suppose, what we may call the common sense aspect, as well as the theoretic aspect of it. So far as the theory is concerned, I do not quite see what my hon. friend aims at in the first section of the Bill, in which I find these words:

All titles of honour or honorary titles heretofore created by the Parliament or Government of Canada.

Until I noticed these words, I did not have the idea that the Government of Canada or the Parliament of Canada had ever created any such honorary titles as are

[Mr. Burnham.]

probably aimed at by my hon. friend in the Bill. He did not mention those to which he referred.

Mr. BURNHAM: They can be created under the Militia Act for example.

Mr. FOSTER: I had the idea that nowadays those were so common that they were no longer considered so distinctly honorary that they could be aimed at by my hon. friend in this Bill. I am quite aware that for a defenceless layman like myself, surrounded by military men on all sides, to make an assertion like that in this House, is a piece of hardihood which, if I had thought it over a little while longer, I possibly would not have committed. However, we cannot withdraw what goes on 'Hansard'; we had to-day a little lesson with reference to that.

I have not very much to say upon this question except that I think the bestowment of honours comes from the source of all honour, that is, the King; and that we must allow the King to have unrestricted scope as to the selection of persons upon whom to bestow these titles of honour. I do not know that this Parliament, not having the power of originating or controlling; not being the supreme source of power so far as the bestowment of honours is concerned, has anything particular to say about it, or should pass legislation with reference to it. That is my first objection to the passage of a Bill of this kind in this Parliament. With respect to democracy and its demands, and, incidentally, with respect to the old adage which has come to us from early times, 'Virtue is its own reward,' however much venter or outside appearance of democracy a man or a people may take on, those of us who do not make such open pretensions to democracy are probably quite as really and truly democratic as they are. I am not quite sure that there is not innate in every person an ever-present recognition of the fact that men do differ one from the other, and that there are grades in excellence, and whether an honour is indicated by the aggregate public opinion as expressed by the society in which a man may live, or whether that expression is embodied in the bestowment of a well-earned honour by the King himself, I do not think it is at all a bad thing that a man should be so rated according to his excellence. I believe that that is the spur of all best endeavour. Virtue may be its own reward to one's self in one's own heart and conscience, but the reward is better