

*Human Rights*

on this subject have been of a very high level and they speak very well of the members of this parliament. I must, however, take issue with the statements made by the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) when he told the house, as found at page 5728 of *Hansard*:

This bill will not add something to our legal safeguards which does not at present exist. This bill has the value of being a declaration of the convictions of this parliament with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms, but I submit that in its present form it is no more than that.

I suspect, that the hon. member for Essex East has not read section 3 of the said bill which reads in part as follows:

All the acts of the parliament of Canada enacted before or after the commencement of this part, all orders, rules and regulations thereunder, and all laws in force in Canada or in any part of Canada at the commencement of this part that are subject to be repealed, abolished or altered by the parliament of Canada, shall, unless it is otherwise expressly stated in any act of the parliament of Canada hereafter enacted, to be so construed and applied as not to abrogate, abridge or infringe or to authorize the abrogation, abridgement or infringement of any of the rights or freedoms recognized by this part—

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** Does my hon. friend deny my statement when I said that this bill does not in any way alter the fundamental law of this country which now protects every right which is sought to be protected in this bill?

**Mr. Regnier:** I will deny the statement just made by the hon. member because the bill makes all laws that have been passed hitherto subject to the principles of this bill and also all future laws that will be passed subject to the principles of this bill.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** It does not alter the law at all.

**Mr. Regnier:** This is more than a declaration of the convictions of this parliament with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms. This bill, with few exceptions, expunges from all acts of the parliament of Canada and all laws in force in any part of Canada anything that abrogates, abridges or infringes any of the rights or freedoms recognized in the bill. Then the eloquent member for Essex East said, as reported at page 5729 of *Hansard*:

—I say to the Prime Minister that this bill is not the best bill that could be brought forward.

This statement from the hon. member is not surprising, as he is undoubtedly of the opinion that no bill of rights is good because none was produced during the long Liberal regime. The hon. member is also reported as saying on the same page of *Hansard*:

[Mr. Regnier.]

There is the danger of restriction in trying to put into the document certain existing rights which will be expanded in the light of new situations, as we now know.

The hon. member could make the same criticism of the decalogue which contains in 10 paragraphs all the moral principles which man must obey.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** No, no.

**Mr. Regnier:** Surely new situations have arisen since the writing of the decalogue. Still it can meet all the situations that have altered since the time of Moses.

(Translation):

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Caron) made this statement, as recorded on page 5676 of *Hansard*:

Besides, if those rights have always existed, and will continue to exist, why clutter up our statutes?

Does not the hon. member believe in the need, for a Christian, to go to church and hear the same principles expounded from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday? Has the hon. member also neglected to read section 3 of the bill of rights? Bill C-79 is not only a declaration of human rights, it also provides for the revision of present and future laws which may come in conflict with its provisions.

I might say the speeches which have been made on this bill of rights are reason enough for introducing this bill, because it contains a reaffirmation and definition of human rights. We have in the past few days enunciated, discussed and affirmed our convictions. Those convictions will fill the pages of our newspapers and inspire our fellow citizens. If that were the only result of this bill, it would be worth while. But those who take the trouble to read the bill realize it is a safeguard for their rights and freedoms. Let us not forget that this new act will have precedence over past and future legislation, as indicated in section 3.

In closing my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I think we should devote a few days every year to a discussion of our freedoms.

(Text):

**Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur):** Mr. Speaker, there is not much in the way of originality that I can bring to this long debate but I do feel it is a rather sad occasion in so far as there seems to be so much difference of opinion of a minor kind on various points in the bill. I have tried to approach the matter from the point of view of a schoolteacher who has taught Canadian history to students between the ages of 14 and 17 perhaps lectured them, I do not