

Canadian Citizen Identification Cards

with great care. The question was raised after the events of one year ago in Quebec. I believe the Minister of Justice of that province made the proposal. It was made, I think, in the heat of great stress and provocation. The idea was put forward as a measure to protect the state. According to what I have read subsequently, the idea has not been pressed further. I am under the impression that the Quebec Minister of Justice does not favour too strongly his original proposal and that he sees certain dangers which are involved.

We know that identification cards will not prevent evil people from carrying out their evil ends. Whether they have identity cards or not will make no difference to them. Such cards will do little to protect the state. In the first place, the authorities must catch the evil-doers before asking for their identity cards. This is like the old story of sprinkling salt on a bird's tail: first you must catch the bird and then sprinkle salt on its tail. Similarly, you have to catch a man before you ask for his identity card. I do not understand how identification cards, under present conditions, would be of any help. At present almost everybody has some form of identification. Banks accept almost any form of identification—a driver's licence, social security card, credit card, and so on. This proves only that you are alive, which is obvious because you are there. This is about all such identification proves. For the traditional reasons that are often advanced, I oppose the idea of giving people an identification card to be used in their daily affairs.

As I see it, any legislation making mandatory an identity card always contains a second clause that says the police are entitled to ask for your identity card whenever they feel like it. There is real danger in this practice. I have never seen any legislation of this kind which does not include some sort of licence, or right, giving the police the right to look at the identification on demand. That is true of the breath-test law and of many other laws. When you are driving a car the police are entitled to ask for your driver's licence without saying why they want it. Generally, they keep you in suspense. As I see it, the great danger in introducing an identification card system is that the police could demand to see it.

I oppose the motion because it suggests that the government ought to look into this question. I think this would be interpreted as *carte blanche* from this House to seriously consider it—and without intending to appear mean in any way, the last thing I would want to give this government is the right to impose further restrictions on the liberties of the Canadian people. I think the general history of the last two or three years shows the government has adopted a generally autocratic attitude toward Canadian citizens and the Canadian House of Commons. I would not want to give them one more twist of the wrist. I would oppose the motion for that reason alone.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Osler) has already indicated, it is perhaps a good idea that this question be aired, at least during this hour. But like the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken), I would not like to see the motion passed if it meant that the idea would be considered at all seriously.

[Mr. Aiken.]

During this hour I believe it has been clearly indicated that the overwhelming feeling in the House of Commons is that there should not be any legislation requiring all persons in Canada to carry identification cards. Like others who have spoken, I believe it is a good idea for individuals voluntarily to carry various proofs of identification. This is useful in case of accident, in case one is lost or in difficulty of any kind. But surely the emphasis on carrying this kind of identification should be voluntary. Likewise, I have no quarrel with the idea that in cases where the state has the authority to licence individuals to do certain things, such as drive a car, or fish, and so on, the holders of such licences should be required to carry proof that they have been so licenced.

I believe it is also proper for banking institutions and other credit institutions to issue cards to individuals verifying that they have been authorized to engage in such functions. But when it comes to an identity card which, in effect, you would be required to carry to prove your right to be here, your right to live, I suggest we are going too far.

I hope I am not being unfair to the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Leblanc). I listened to what he said, and I listened carefully to the answer he gave to the question asked by my hon. friend from Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson). It seems that one of the main reasons he has in mind in proposing identification cards is to cope with criminals. One of the things he suggested about the kind of card he had in mind was that fingerprints should be on it. In effect, the motion is suggesting to every Canadian that he must carry a card to prove he is not a criminal. I believe this is completely contrary to our concept of a free society, and that it is not a good idea at all.

None of us in this House offers any criticism of the hon. member for presenting the motion so that the matter can be discussed, but I would think this airing has made it clear that most of us feel that though the carrying of voluntary identification cards is quite in order, any compulsory carrying of identity cards imposed upon all Canadians is not something which commends itself in our kind of free society.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I would ask consent of the House to revert to motions.

Mr. Speaker: Is there disposition on the part of the House to allow the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) to seek leave to revert to motions.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

UNITED NATIONS

ALBANIAN RESOLUTION ON CHINA—TABLING OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN QUEBEC AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to table two sets of documents; first, the