

sions in a Private Member's Public Bill introduced in the House, and I would have hoped that the Government would have jumped on that opportunity to reaffirm its policy on this matter.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) on debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, if the applause keeps up I will not have time to speak.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Redway: I can tell that I am very popular when I rise in this House!

It is a pleasure to address a few remarks to Bill C-27 which, as many Hon. Members have indicated, is an Act to amend certain Acts having regard to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Bill C-27 has been described as an omnibus Bill. It amends over 50 separate pieces of legislation. In preparing this legislation, the Government reviewed in excess of 1,100 separate statutes in an attempt to bring them into line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In particular, the Government attempted to bring those statutes into line with the Charter prior to April 17 of this year. Of course, that date is very significant.

Some Hon. Members have previously referred to the significance of that date. I would like to remind Hon. Members of the significance of the equality section, Section 15(1), which reads as follows:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

That is a very important section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It is interesting to note that there is another section of the Charter which limited the time in which Section 15(1) would come into effect. That is Section 32(2) which reads as follows:

Notwithstanding subsection (1), section 15 shall not have effect until three years after this section comes into force.

The Constitution Act of Canada and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into force by proclamation on April 17, 1982. Three years from that date, which is a few short days from now, Section 15(1) of the Act will finally come into force and be part of the law of this country. I have been shocked in the past, Mr. Speaker, to find that, notwithstanding my belief and understanding that this was not only part of the basic rights and freedoms of this country from time immemorial, but part of the rights recognized around the world as basic rights and freedoms, the courts of this country really did not recognize these rights and, frankly, I suspect do not recognize these rights at this present time, and will not recognize them until April 17 of this year.

Statute Law Amendment Act

• (1210)

As a lawyer practising law a year or two ago in Metropolitan Toronto, I had the occasion to raise this point in a case in court involving a matter where I felt very strongly that the accused party had been discriminated against. I referred to the common law of the Province of Ontario. I referred to the Charter of Rights and, in particular, to Section 15(1) of the Charter of Rights. I was shocked, quite frankly, when the judge pointed out to me that, according to Section 32(2) of the Charter, in fact this section does not come into effect until April 17, 1985. So it is not in effect even at this time.

I always thought, as I indicated, Mr. Speaker, that these rights which are enunciated here were part of the basic rights and freedoms of this country, that they had been part of the basic rights and freedoms which evolved from the British common law which is in force in this country, apart from the Province of Quebec. I believed these rights were in force as a result of importation, perhaps one might say, from other countries such as the United States and France with their Bill of Rights, and that it was imported into this country certainly by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights of which we are signing members. I thought it was in force in this country through the Bill of Rights which a former Prime Minister, the Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker, introduced into this House and which was passed into law. I always thought that, as a result of that long chain of events, this was and always had been part of the rights and freedoms of every Canadian. But that is not so. Mr. Speaker, and it is still not so today and will not be so until April 17 of this year.

I am particularly delighted, therefore, notwithstanding that I do not usually like to see the days of my life zip by, that we are coming up to that date so that at long last all Canadians will have these rights and freedoms which are set out in Section 15(1), the right that every individual is equal before and under the law.

Some Hon. Members of this House have indicated that they have many concerns about this Bill. One concern is that the Bill does not go far enough, that it does not take into account all of the positions put forward in the past by many different groups and organizations. They have concerns that the special committee, which will be headed by the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore (Mr. Boyer) and represented by Hon. Members on all sides of this House, and the hearings which it is going to hold, is merely a duplication of things which have happened in the past.

I was interested to note, Mr. Speaker, some of the comments which Hon. Members have made in that regard and the points to which they have directed their attention. In particular, I note that a good deal of attention has been paid to the question of the equality rights of women. That is a very important and significant area which obviously must be addressed. But it seems to me that Hon. Members of the Opposition have overlooked the fact that it was but a week or two ago that the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) rose in this House and announced some very important and significant improvements and strides as far as women's rights