

West Indies

may as a former academician lapse into an unusual use of the vernacular.

I would like to see the matter looked at again because, in my opinion, one of the most useful studies of the relationship of Canada to the commonwealth Caribbean was undertaken by a parliamentary body which in some quarters occasionally is lambasted. I refer to the Senate of Canada. In 1970 that body set up a committee to study the matter. They looked carefully at the subject and brought in academics, economists, political leaders, industrialists and so on. This committee prepared a very good report. I think it deserves more care and attention, and could be profitably picked up again. One recommendation is the following:

● (1610)

The possibility of constitutional links between Canada and the countries of the Caribbean area should be re-appraised by the Canadian government. This prospect now seems remote, but the Canadian government should be prepared to discuss proposals for closer economic and political association between Canada and countries of the area.

While I am referring to the Senate recommendations I should mention one more which I think is very important, and which I endorse wholeheartedly. This is contained in the preamble, recommendation No. 5. It reads as follows:

The excellent and highly competitive rums of the Commonwealth Caribbean should receive as much assistance as possible in the Canadian market. The 1966 agreement to implement labelling regulations went into effect on July 1st, 1969, but does not appear to have led to any dramatic increase in imports. The committee recommends that the Canadian government re-assess the effectiveness of this measure and that the mutual advantages to Canada and the Caribbean countries concerned be discussed at the ministerial level with the respective Canadian provinces.

In other words we have to think not only of aid but of trade, and it is an old law of economics from those old days when the laws prevailed, and when inflation and unemployment were cyclical rather than simultaneous events, that we should trade best in things in which we have comparative advantage. That is why the Senate zeroed in on West Indian rum, which of course is the finest in the world.

I do not want anyone to accuse a gentle person like myself of harbouring imperialist ambitions. I remember raising this matter a few years ago, and somebody said that it was imperialism. I have no illusions of Canada sending down its aging destroyers and taking over these areas, nor do I suggest that we go down there with the big buck—which, by the way, is dwindling these days—and move in. My motion very carefully points out that if there is an interest, we should respond to it with friendship and brotherhood.

I do not suppose we will see the day when any part of the West Indies or the Commonwealth Caribbean will be an integral part of Canada politically, but if they should wish it, I would not be afraid of it. I would hate to be numbered among the ranks of the narrow minded who would say that because of the colour of the skin of most of their inhabitants we could not envisage a close relationship constitutionally and politically with those people. The essence is that it is their wish which must be considered. It is our posture and our policy consistently to be ready with the hand of friendship, to be ready with a

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

practical attitude and with an attitude of goodwill in regard to immigration.

When I was half as old as I am now, a mere stripling, I used to teach in some of the Atlantic college universities. Many of the students were from the Commonwealth Caribbean, and long before the days when it became popular to talk about the lack of prejudice, there was a total and complete fraternity among those students, and that has developed through the years. I had the great pleasure just two days ago of chatting with His Excellency the High Commissioner to Canada from the Bahamas, and he recalled that when I was a professor at Mount Allison, he was a student. Since that was a long time ago and I was very young, I did not pry too far as to how well he knew me or my activities, but in any case I did know that the Caribbean students were a very valued and highly regarded part of that campus and of every other campus in the Atlantic provinces.

So I again raise this matter. I ask the House to turn its attention to it. It is not exclusive of the larger islands which are sovereign states. It is not exclusive of the islands of the Caribbean which are not of the Commonwealth. I welcome most heartily the stepped up trade with Cuba and the opening of doors which have not been opened earlier, and one of the things I appreciated most about the government which I supported in 1962 was that, against very heavy pressure, Canada decided to retain and maintain its diplomatic and commercial ties with Cuba. There is no reason why we should not welcome the opening of doors with Haiti, which has a better and more amenable regime than before. These are the kinds of developments we should welcome.

I see no attitude except that of practical friendship between Canada and the people of the Commonwealth Caribbean. Because of the uniqueness of their problems and the great difficulty to retain their viability, I think that the islands mentioned here should be given consideration.

On the Turks and Caicos islands there are 6,000 people on 166 square miles. We do not even have a CIDA program for those islands. At least we could do that. I remember the director of the hospital and the community centre there saying that he had the British medical journals, but he would like to get Canadian ones. Through the good offices of the Overseas Book League, that now has been done. There is a need for teachers in the Turks and Caicos islands. The Ontario government was very helpful with school books, but much more can be done, and in view of their clear indication that Canada is a place of special interest to them, I would like us to respond with practical friendship, with an obvious interest, and with a clear, strong indication of good will.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Claude-André Lachance (Lafontaine-Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, before dealing in a detailed way with the essential of the motion moved by the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), I deem it important to reassert the Canadian government's interest in the Commonwealth West Indies. My hon. colleagues know that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) had the opportunity, over