

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

Mr. MacLean: There have been a great many interesting speeches today on the very important topics of citizenship and immigration, but I have got the impression that the accent was on the immigration side of things. I think that the question of citizenship is extremely important too. It is not my intention to take up much time of the committee, but I should like to express certain opinions and make a suggestion to the minister.

It seems to me that if one looks back over the history of civilizations which existed before our own one finds that time proved that they did not have the permanency that their citizens imagined that they had. It is also the fact that most of these civilizations collapsed and were overrun, not because they were destroyed by conquest from without but simply because they rotted from within. These civilizations were developed by very energetic people who had a strong sense of purpose, who put up with hardships and who knew what they stood for, but after a few generations of soft living and a faltering of the ideals of their ancestors the then citizens shirked their responsibilities as far as their way of life was concerned, and it was only a matter of time until they were overrun.

I feel there is a danger of that happening to us. I have been shocked, particularly since entering public life, by the abysmal ignorance of large groups of Canadian citizens with regard to our system of civilization and government and their responsibilities in connection therewith. You will find this ignorance not only among the illiterate but among people who look upon themselves as being well educated and people who have quite a bit of formal education, high school graduates and even university graduates.

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. member should come to Newfoundland. We have a higher level there.

Mr. MacLean: I hope you are right. I am glad to hear the Secretary of State say that, and I hope that is not due to the fact that Newfoundland has only lately come into confederation.

Mr. Fulton: The Secretary of State has only recently gone down to Newfoundland.

Mr. MacLean: I find, for instance, that many people who consider themselves fairly well educated have no knowledge as to the various fields of federal, provincial and municipal governments. For instance, they have no knowledge with respect to such a simple question as to what government is responsible for the upkeep of roads or other public works.

[Mr. Harris.]

It is rather disheartening to realize the little value the average citizen places on his right to exercise his franchise. There are thousands of people in Canada who do not ever bother to vote, and in some cases the ones who do feel that they are doing someone a favour by casting their ballot; that it is something they must be coaxed into or pushed into or even bribed into doing. There are people who believe that the vote is a marketable asset which they try to sell to the highest bidder, if there are any around. I feel that is an unfortunate situation. If our system is to survive, I believe as much as possible should be done to educate, not only the new immigrants coming into the country but our own citizens whose people have been here for generations as to their responsibility. These people should be given an elementary knowledge of our system of government and the importance of the things for which it stands.

Only the other day most of the members of this committee had an opportunity of hearing General Gruenther speak. He said at that time that one of the greatest dangers to our western civilization was the fact that we seem in danger of losing the ideological war. Our western civilization does not seem to know for what it stands. He went on to say that it is not enough to be against communism, we must be for democracy. I agree with that 100 per cent.

I have been pleased to see some excellent booklets which the department put out a year or two ago in this regard. The series covers our land, our history, our government and so forth. I believe they are very good, although I think the particular title for "our government" would be more apt if it were "our system of government".

Mr. Harris: I assure the committee that was unconscious, and it will not be done again.

Mr. MacLean: I must say that these booklets are very good but they do not go far enough. I should like to make a suggestion to the minister. It would be money well spent if he were to sponsor a film or a series of films on these topics.

Mr. Pickersgill: Does the hon. member for Kamloops agree?

Mr. MacLean: I believe he would, because if films are used for the right purpose it is money well spent. However, you can squander money in that way. There would not be perhaps any objection to a well made film or series of films on our system of government. There could be one on municipal government, provincial government and