

Canadian Citizenship Act

Mr. Prud'homme: This is disgusting!

Mr. Béchard:—half of them to be given during the first 30 days and the other half 30 before he comes out. I understand the hon. member.

However, I am surprised to hear him say that some judges did not get the message because he must know that in this country justice is administered by judges and not at the executive level or by the government.

Anyway, I think that the hon. member is satisfied with the provisions of Bill C-2 which completely removes this form of punishment from the Criminal Code.

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, in order to clarify this, I might say that I hope the judiciary and other officials across the country will use judicial restraint because in a very short period of time the government bill will become law and, I hope, serve the country well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The Chair cannot allow debate on the subject matter at this time. Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) and the seconder of the motion, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), to withdraw the bill because the subject matter is contained in another bill?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and bill withdrawn.

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CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

AMENDMENT TO CHANGE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce) moved that Bill C-18, to amend the Canadian Citizenship Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to make it perfectly clear that the first allegiance of a Canadian citizen is to Canada and the Canadian constitution and to confirm in our oath that Canada is a free and independent nation. The bill suggests that we have the following oath in our Canadian Citizenship Act:

I, A.B., swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Canada and the Canadian Constitution, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

So help me God.

In my opinion, the present oath is unsatisfactory. It reads as follows:

I, A.B., swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

So help me God.

I say that the present oath is unsatisfactory because Her Majesty is the head of state of several commonwealth countries. If we swear true and faithful allegiance to her, it is difficult in logic to determine where our loyalty lies

when the Canadian government disagrees with other commonwealth countries. I know that legally Her Majesty is Queen of Canada, but this is a legal fiction. It is very difficult to explain to the ordinary citizen how Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second in the right of Canada can vote against Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second in the right of the United Kingdom as she did in 1956 at the United Nations during the Suez crisis. The symbolic Her Majesty was voting against herself. She was taking two opposing and contradictory positions.

Of course, as I have already said, this is a legal fiction. It does not really happen that way. What really happens is that Canada votes against the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand or Singapore. Unfortunately, with the type of oath we have at present, many persons find it confusing to understand how they can swear allegiance to Her Majesty and still place their full loyalty with Canada. I submit that it is much more honest, clear and understandable that we pledge our allegiance to Canada and the Canadian constitution. If this is what people are doing, this is what they should say.

Many new Canadians have told me how disappointed they were with the present oath when they had to take it at the citizenship ceremonies. Many of these people had given up their countries of birth to come to Canada. Of all the countries in the world, they had chosen Canada to be their country and to pledge their allegiance to her. In the citizenship ceremonies, however, they were pledging their allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her heirs and successors. As I said before, this is confusing. It is not an honest type of oath. It does not reflect the reality that we want to see.

While I agree that in most cases commonwealth countries agree with each other, there are serious instances when they do not. I gave the example of Suez. There have also been disagreements over trade, Rhodesia, and South Africa. Possibly there will be further disagreements with the United Kingdom over other matters. There could be a disagreement with the common market provisions once they are in force.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): You are denying the commonwealth.

Mr. Allmand: No, I am not. This is not a measure to abolish the monarchy in Canada, to withdraw from the commonwealth or to change our constitution in any way.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): It is a giant step toward it.

Mr. Allmand: The monarchy is part of our constitution. If we pledge allegiance to the Canadian constitution, we include the monarchy in that oath. The principal difference is one of emphasis. At the present time the emphasis is on Her Majesty, only one part of our constitution. Under my bill, the emphasis would be on Canada and the entire Canadian constitution, but not eliminating the monarchy.

I am of British origin and I have great respect for the British monarchy and British institutions. Having said that, I think Canadians should stress those things which make them Canadian and which unite them as Canadians.