

Government Orders

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have been trying to get your eye or your ear on this one.

I did not vote the last time because I was a bit late for the question. This time I would like to have my vote recorded with the government actually on both those bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Do we have the unanimous consent of the House to modify the vote to include the hon. member?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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DEPARTMENT OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-35, an act to establish the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Brian Tobin (for Minister of Citizenship and Immigration) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Tobin (for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on third reading of Bill C-35.

First I want to thank all members of the House for their co-operation and goodwill in seeing the bill through. Although the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act is essentially a housekeeping measure, members from all parties have offered some very thoughtful and helpful comments.

The bill has a straightforward and clear purpose: to provide a standard legislative basis for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. The department now exists by virtue of Order in Council. For all its brevity and clarity the bill is significant for several reasons.

One of the Prime Minister's first decisions—perhaps the hon. member for Beaver River would like to listen—on assuming office last fall was to create the new department. All members know why he gave it this priority.

During the election campaign the Prime Minister spoke vigorously on the issue. Continuing to include immigration within a department of public security would send precisely the wrong message to Canadians and the international community.

The bill carries through on the principles of the red book where we called for a dynamic approach to immigration, balancing humanitarian considerations with our demographic and economic needs.

Under Bill C-35 the structure of the department will reflect that balanced approach. Joining citizenship with immigration has a compelling logic. It is a natural fit. To acquire citizenship is a significant step in integrating newcomers into Canadian society. It means making a personal commitment to Canada and understanding the requirements, privileges and responsibilities of becoming Canadians.

• (2035)

Citizenship completes the process begun by immigration. The department believes that citizenship and immigration spring from the same common values and aims. My hon. friend from Hamilton—Wentworth put it rather well in the House the other day. He said that immigration is the body of this country and citizenship is the soul. So the department makes good common sense in the way it brings together the operational policy and promotional aspects of both citizenship and immigration.

The new department was created from parts of three others. Forging a common sense of purpose is not something that can be done overnight merely by order in council. Nearly 20 years ago the distinguished novelist and physicist C. P. Snow said that Canada has the finest civil service in the world today. I suspect that most Canadians do not realize it but it is a fact recognized by civil servants everywhere in the world. I hope that hon. members agree with me when I say that we want to be able to say that again, and sooner rather than later.

With a legislative basis staff can concentrate on even more efficient delivery of services, knowing that their careers can progress on the same terms as in any other department. More important, as the minister said in the House on second reading, the legislation modernizes and streamlines the government to meet the needs of Canadians and gives us the tools we need to deal effectively with the myriad complex issues of citizenship and immigration.

By taking programs, resources and responsibilities from several different departments and consolidating them in one department we make the government more accountable and more open.