

*Private Members' Business*

I am suggesting that we amend the Citizenship Act and replace the present oath of allegiance, which is principally an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II or whoever the monarch might be, with an oath of allegiance in which new Canadians would swear or affirm that they will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Canada and the Constitution of Canada and that they will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil their duties as Canadian citizens.

I have spoken to many people in my constituency and they think this makes sense. When I tell them what the present oath is, and these are people who were born in Canada, they are surprised that we still have an oath in which we principally pledge allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. None of them are anti-monarchists but they are surprised that we still have such an oath.

I would hope that the House would agree with me on these points. I was not in Parliament when we had the flag debate. I arrived soon afterwards, but I was here when we debated the anthem and other moves to consolidate Canadian symbols and Canadian institutions. There was support in all parties.

If we are really concerned with unity and want to do things that will promote patriotism in this country we must start doing away with those things which divide us or pull us apart. To maintain, after centuries, these fictional ties, and they are fictional, with monarchs and institutions in other countries, even though they are friendly countries—we have no official constitutional ties with the United States yet we are friendly with the United States. We have no constitutional ties with France but we are friendly with France and belong to special associations with France. It is the same with the United Kingdom. I am not suggesting in this bill that we do away with the monarchy. I am simply saying that when new Canadians come to this country they should pledge allegiance to this country and to no one else and no other country.

**Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the private members' bill that has been put before us today concerning changing our oath. The member has explained the changes that he wishes to make. I want to say in very clear and unequivocal terms that I am totally opposed to what the member is suggesting.

The oath as we have it now is exactly as it should be. I want to explain briefly why I think it is exactly as it should be and why we should retain it that way.

• (1520)

I would like to comment on some of the points raised by the hon. member. I was taking notes as he went through his speech. First he said: "What is the purpose of the oath?"

He then dwelt upon the fact that many immigrants come to Canada from countries other than Britain. That is true, many do. My parents came from the Soviet Union. Many immigrants come from countries other than England. That is simply a statement of the obvious. So what?

Then he went on to say that in an act of citizenship, when a person comes from countries other than England I guess was the point he was trying to make, and then applies to become a citizen of Canada, that somehow our oath of allegiance for citizenship in Canada is confusing to them.

Well if it is confusing to them maybe they should wait a couple of more years and learn the history of Canada and our parliamentary institutions. When they understand Canada and want to assure active citizenship which is the highest right we can give them, then they should take it after they have learned and understood what Canada is all about.

You do not give an act of citizenship because somehow people do not understand. That would be taking our systems and all of the things we value, such as our act of citizenship, and reducing it to the lowest common denominator of ignorance. That would be our new standard.

I cannot believe the hon. member. I know the hon. member loves playing hockey and so do I. We still play in old-timers' hockey leagues and we are pleased that we have them. I wonder if the hon. member has not crossed into the boards too often. Something has gone wrong. I cannot believe this.

He said that it is confusing, that it is not clear and we should make it more meaningful. What he is really saying is that if a person who comes to us from a non-parliamentary system—

**Mr. Allmand:** No, no. Everybody including the British.