

the House? I think we would all feel a lot better if the discussions were brought forward in what I hope and suspect we will get from the joint House-Senate committee. Would there be unanimous consent on a group of motions to be brought back regarding constitutional reform?

• (1140)

It is very important that we all get involved in the constitutional reform debate. Quite possibly during that debate maybe the member for Hamilton West will stand in this House and restate his position, which he feels very strongly about. I hope he does take the time to do that.

I would like to close with a comment to all members of the House. The best way to resolve our constitutional problems is to listen to our constituents. Sometimes we have to go to our constituents and show them that there is a certain need for discussion. Maybe this debate today is doing just that, showing that there is a need, a need for this specific issue to be brought forward in the discussion. To deal with this today, when we have a Constitution that has to be revised, is not the time and not the place.

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the matter that is really right at the heart of what we do and who we are as members of Parliament in this House of Commons.

After being elected but before each or any of us take our seats in this House, each one of us did take the oath of allegiance. For each of us, taking that oath stands out as a very proud moment, a moment when we realize the full weight of the tradition that stands behind us in this House.

In this bill the member for Hamilton West suggests that we expand the scope of the oath to include fidelity to the observation of the laws and Constitution of Canada and to the fulfilment of duty as a Canadian citizen and as a member of Parliament. Members may be aware that with this proposed addition, the oath for members of Parliament becomes quite similar to the oath taken by new citizens of Canada. The oath for the Canadian citizen is:

I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, 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.

Private Members' Business

A question which may be in the minds of members is this: Why does the member for Hamilton West suggest that members of Parliament swear a new oath, one that parallels or even may duplicate the oath for citizens?

This oath sums up some of the responsibilities of every Canadian citizen: To be loyal to the Queen of Canada and her representatives and to the Governor General and Lieutenant-Governors, to be loyal to Canada, to obey Canada's laws, to respect the rights of others, to respect private and public property, to care for Canada's heritage, to support Canada's ideals.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees all Canadians the right to vote in federal and provincial elections, the right to be a candidate in federal and provincial elections, the right to enter, remain in or leave Canada, the right to earn a living and reside in any province and minority language educational rights.

The principles of citizenship is a subject which may not receive the attention that it deserves. I think my colleague from across the way has raised this. Citizens by birth and by choice have equal status, enjoy identical rights and privileges and are subject to the same duties and responsibilities. Citizens are loyal to the country with allegiance to its institutions, the Canadian Constitution and the law of the land. Citizens have both knowledge and understanding of Canada's system of government, its political and cultural history and official symbols. Citizens also accept that Canada is a united federal structure and that its character is multicultural. They have a knowledge of at least one of the official languages of Canada, that being either English or French.

Citizens do promote pride in Canada, in its institutions and its various communities by striving to enhance the quality of Canadian life. They use their knowledge of the nation's structure and language to participate fully in public affairs. We have seen that quite clearly over the past few months.

Citizens honour, respect and value the contributions of individuals from various and different cultures from coast to coast. They enrich Canadian life. They contribute to the linguistic and cultural diversity that really is a hallmark of this nation.

Citizens acknowledge their responsibilities as members of the global community to support and to respect fundamental human rights everywhere and to honour all