

VERNMENT



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## THE IDEA OF CITIZENSHIP

An address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, before the Rotary Club, Ottawa, May 21, 1951, on the occasion of a visit to Ottawa of 132 High School Students from across Canada.

... It is interesting to recall the development of the idea of citizenship from its original concept, a Greek one, of loyalty to one's city. That loyalty was not difficult, because the things nearest and dearest and most appealing to us, such as our family and our civic pride and interest always have a special place in our sentiment.

Then from the Greek concept there developed the idea of "Civis Romanus Sum", to include any person owing allegiance to Rome. From this grew the imperial concept of a citizenship, which brought order, if not freedom, to such a great part of the world at that time. The break-up of the Roman Empire, with its emphasis on order and civic virtue, was followed first by the Dark Ages and then by feudalism, where the emphasis was on status rather than citizenship, and where society was based on a hierarchy of loyalties and fealties. Out of the feudalism grew the modern state, with its stressing of nationality, the equality of citizens before the law, of pride in citizenship and the right of every citizen to the protection of his nation state. The pinnacle of this idea was reached, probably, in the middle of the 19th Century in Great Britain, when a Foreign Minister, Lord Palmerston, could say: "Just as the Roman of old could feel secure when he could say, "Civis Romanus Sum", so, today, the British Subject, in whatever clime he may be, can feel that the strong arm and the watchful eye of Britain will protect him from all wrong."

At times, this imperial concept of citizenship tended to become bombastic and exclusive, and to rouse the resentment of "lesser breeds beyond the law". In one sense, in recent years, we have abandoned it for something more national and less imperial. In another sense, however, we are widening it toward a citizenship which would cover all free peoples, with its emphasis on internationalism rather than nationalism.

This idea was put whimsically and impressively by an editor of the NEW YORKER some years ago, when he wrote:

"After the third war was over (this was our curious dream), there was no more than a handful of people left alive, and the earth was in ruins and the ruins were horrible to behold. The people, the survivors, decided to meet to talk over their problem and to make a lasting peace, which is the customary thing to make after a long, exhausting war. There were eighty-three countries, and each country sent a delegate to the convention....Each