

Alarmists keep repeating that the French language is on its last legs in Canada, that it is rapidly disappearing and that we will probably be the last generation to speak French in North America. You will allow me to doubt these prophecies of misfortune. When I was a journalist, I occasionally had to consult old newspapers and read a good deal of history. In 1810, people were worrying about the fate of the French language in Canada and were predicting that the younger generation would be completely assimilated. That was over 150 years ago. And ever since, every 20 years, the same fears continued to be expressed. Even more recently, if you look at the newspapers of not more than 25 years ago, you will see that all advertising was in English, so that even French daily newspapers advertised sales of "overcoats" and "windbreakers." Could this be done today without incurring general criticism and ridicule? A few years ago, the sociologist Jean-Charles Falardeau proposed a theory which was both disquieting and reassuring. He compared the development of the French language in Canada to the opening of a pair of scissors. Whereas 50 years ago, our peasants spoke better French than the inhabitants of our cities, the situation is now very different. The educated public speaks a language which is increasingly correct and accurate, while in areas where the level of instruction is low a certain decline in the language can be observed, especially in the urban environment. Is this not proof, then, that the solution lies in raising the level of education? I personally feel that, with the new teaching techniques, wider access to higher education and a steady improvement of the mass communication medias, we shall be able to slow down, and even halt completely, the disintegration of our language. I do not want you to think that I am an over-confident optimist and that I feel that the battle is won. We must be on guard constantly. I cannot understand, for example, why Quebec, instead of thinking of unilingualism, does not think of making its entire population study enough French at school to be able to speak the language fluently. Rather than depriving new Canadians and the English-speaking minority of a language they want, I would plan to provide them with an additional asset: compulsory and well-taught French.

Similarly, it is unthinkable that the conditions imposed on the French language in the other provinces should not undergo thorough and rapid change. A country cannot proclaim itself bilingual. Such a claim to cultural duality will remain a grotesque lie as long as some of the country's authorities continue to forbid the use of one of the two official languages as a language of instruction.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Having read the Throne Speech, you will know that the Federal Government is determined to set order in its own house. An Official Languages Act, whose contents I am unfortunately unable to reveal here, since it has not yet been presented to the House, will be submitted to Parliament in the near future. It is to be hoped that the provincial governments will follow suit.

However, the task falls first upon us, the French-speaking citizens of Canada.

What has, up to now, been a difficult survival of the French language must become once again a creative force. And "creative force" was never the synonym of "exaggerated purism". It is a question of regenerating the language and not merely of preserving it. A living language cannot be a mausoleum.

You should neither become intimidated nor carry the defensive instinct to the point of an unhealthy fear of all translations. Great cultures have always promptly and ably translated meaningful writings of other countries. Read the *Book Review* of the *New York Times* and you will see that the best books published in all languages are immediately translated. As for myself, I shall always prefer a manual that has been well thought-out by Americans and translated into high-quality French to a book that was written originally in French but is scientifically unsound or inspired by faulty pedagogical principles.

If, finally, we fully confirm our position as North Americans, we can play an important role in the French-speaking world as original creators. We must neither renounce these North American roots of ours nor be ashamed of them; we must make of them the original, indispensable element of our contribution to the French-speaking world....

These have been a few, perhaps rather rambling reflections, which I have had the pleasure of conveying to you, and before I leave I should like to say that I feel it is essential for all of you who edit, publish and translate information to adopt the highest standards of professional ethics. To inform, in French, a people who have too long forgotten the importance of their language is, in a way, to act as a teacher. The wrong use of a term or expression is no longer merely a simple error that can be corrected; the danger is rather that you will be imitated! When we have been assigned a role as important as that of putting the final touches to all written or broadcast works intended for the Canadian public first, and then for the public abroad, we are taking on a responsibility of the greatest importance. If I may quote Mr. Servan-Schreiber - it is up to the French language to accept, through us, the "American challenge".

FITNESS COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Two internationally-known hockey figures were among nine Canadians appointed recently to the National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport by National Health and Welfare Minister John Munro. Jean Beliveau of the Montreal *Canadiens* was named to his first term on the 30-member Council and the Reverend David Bauer, special adviser to the Canadian national hockey team and originator of the current national team idea, was appointed for a second term.

The new appointments, effective immediately and expiring at the end of 1970, also include a doctor, a sociologist, a stockbroker, a gymnastic coach, former athletes, a recreation director and a lawyer.