

Ontarians have suffered greatly from this concept of where numbers warrant. I speak from experience because I have spent 11 years on schools boards, from 1961 to 1972, trying to make local and provincial authorities understand the grounds for a French-language high school system financed by the Ontario treasury.

● (1830)

We have won a few battles, but we are still far from having the homogeneous French school system we want and hope to have one day. If minority rights had been entrenched in the constitution, we would have reached our goal more quickly. We are constantly in danger of being assimilated by the majority group. It has sometimes been only through our individual will and collective determination that we have been able to hope to survive as French-speaking Canadians. Once again, Mr. Speaker, if minority rights had been entrenched, we would have been able to remain more numerous. Individually, French Canadians have survived only because of their persistent fighting spirit. They have been attacked from all sides, and sometimes, they were able to survive because they were attacked. When you are ignored, you die, but when you are attacked, if you have courage, you defend yourself, and this is what we did. Mr. Speaker, a minority needs more rights than the majority. I am disappointed to note that he has left, but in any case, I was very disappointed last Tuesday to hear the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. LaSalle) lecture French minorities outside Quebec about language rights. I was surprised and saddened that this Francophone member of Parliament would give us the classical argument of majorities concerning entrenchment of rights in the constitution, and I quote:

—as these rights are very closely related to the provincial jurisdiction over education, I do not see why it should be urgent or necessary to enshrine them in the constitution at the risk of giving rise to quarrels like those the past generations have known.

That is certainly the hon. member for Joliette speaking! When a French minority in another province asks for the concrete and practical means to survive, it is told that it must absolutely not provoke conflicts and frictions within the community. It is all right to help it, but only if this disturbs in no way the group which is comfortably installed in a majority position. If it follows the rule suggested by the hon. member for Joliette, the minority has only one alternative: to keep still, be quiet and let itself be assimilated.

The linguistic minorities of Canada have no intention of listening to the nonsense uttered by the hon. member for Joliette. He speaks very strangely. He speaks the language of some of the premiers who suggested only a few years ago that they should sign bilateral agreements concerning education and who favoured interprovincial bargaining with their minorities as pawns.

Mr. Speaker, we will stand up against the trade-off of our survival, we are not the pawns of the majority, we want our rights to be entrenched in our constitution. We dream of

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becoming first-class citizens. This collective will has given birth to several movements aimed at regrouping minorities. We have created many associations and several organizations. These associations are made up of average Canadians and are striving to correct linguistic injustice, both at school and in society. These provincial associations which often work in an hostile environment have been the main architects of an almost permanent fight. We need them, they need us and the federal government has supported them, God knows how much. Some might say that these provincial and national organizations are lobbying groups sometimes led by ambitious leaders. If the leaders are sometimes obliged to speak frankly and roughly to governments and to majorities it is because they sometimes have to shout louder to be heard. I think that most Canadians who are part of a minority will support entrenching linguistic rights at school in our constitution. To them it is an important guarantee which will help them in their collective search for equality and equity. For instance, Mr. Speaker, on September 28, 1980, ACFO, the French Canadian Association of Ontario, at their convention in Ottawa, passed the following resolution, this was before the resolution now before us was brought in and I quote:

That ACFO strongly urge patriation of the British North America Act, and that the prerequisite for that support be that the new Canadian Constitution enshrine basic rights and freedoms, including language rights for official language minorities.

It is that same provincial association that often spearheaded the fight in Ontario. We fought for the right to speak and even pray in one's language. We fought for the right to work in one's language, under a boss who often misunderstood our aspirations. We fought to have our children educated in French in Ontario and elsewhere. We fought for public services in French. We fought for the right to defend ourselves in courts of justice at all levels. We fought against language prejudice, that often feeds on misconceptions about the institutional bilingualism. We fought to preserve and develop our culture. Such has been the struggle of generations of Franco-Ontarians and Franco-Manitobans, "Fransaskois", Acadians and people outside Quebec, who wanted to and will succeed in surviving in this country.

It has been pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that although this debate is very important and very serious for the Progressive Conservatives, there are hardly some odd ten of them, here, and I find ridiculous at this stage that we have to sit through dinner hours when those people do not even think it worth their while to remain here to listen to the debates.

Here we are, Mr. Speaker, in 1980, discussing a resolution that is most important in my view. I emphasize the phrase "discussing a resolution", because such is the process that will start after this evening. Whatever the Leader of the Opposition or others on his side may say, the suggestion that we are muzzling this debate is preposterous. What we are doing after three weeks, after hearing nearly 50 members, what we are saying is that finally we must come to serious consideration of