

*The Constitution*

I believe we should guarantee their rights to the full appreciation of their language and culture, and allow their children to have access to French language education as they would have, had they stayed in Quebec.

The converse is also true. When we in the west hear of a friend or neighbour being transferred by his company into Quebec, we expect that province to reciprocate and allow that family to obtain an English education in that province.

Speaking of new wealth in the west, some provincial politicians in western Canada appear to think this new wealth has been forthcoming for decades and has been withheld forcibly by defensive eastern provinces. To these politicians, it appears as though this new wealth will finally allow them to get even with their eastern counterparts. It almost appears at times as if we are experiencing an historical grudge match. It is especially distressing when one considers that it was a crisis in the world oil markets which so influenced the way certain western Canadian politicians were to reassess confederation.

In a country as large and as geographically diverse as Canada, it is not extraordinary that we should come face to face with this problem referred to so often as regional discontent. However, we all have to ask ourselves how profound this problem really is. Do Canadians really feel that way about their regional interests surpassing their national interests, or is the situation being exaggerated by provincial political leaders.

Canadians have managed to build a nation in spite of all these regional barriers. Canadians by birth along with immigrants have opened up the land in western Canada, not to challenge eastern Canada or the federal institutions, but rather to contribute to the building of a nation. Today, I firmly believe that the grandchildren and great grandchildren of these early settlers still believe as strongly in this country as did their ancestors.

● (2130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I represent a riding in Manitoba which has traditionally been bicultural in character, a riding which has its place in history as the fortress of French language and culture in western Canada, a riding which has been in existence since the province of Manitoba joined the Dominion of Canada.

When Manitoba became a Canadian province, French Canadians represented a significant proportion of its population. The school system was divided into two sectors to accommodate both the Protestant and Catholic groups. French was the language of the instruction in the vast majority of Catholic schools, and the Manitoba legislature recognized both languages. The French-Canadian population constituted at that time a homogeneous community in which it was possible to live one's life in French on a daily basis and participate fully in our culture.

At the centre of this community was the church and the family, and French Canadians in Manitoba could gather round

these two institutions so as not to be assimilated by the growing Anglo-Saxon population. With the wave of immigrants and Canadian colonists from Ontario to Western Canada, drawn by the national policy of Macdonald in 1879, French Canadians were soon to be reduced to minority status and swept along on the tide of Anglicization. In 1890 the Manitoba legislature was to abolish French as an official language and set up a public and English-speaking system of non-denominational schools. French Canadians found themselves, in 1890, deprived of the rights conferred on them by the Manitoba Act.

After a series of battles in the Supreme Court and the Privy Council in London, and a series of interventions by the federal government, French Canadians received a few privileges.

I am speaking today in defence of language rights and the right to education in the language of the minority because of my experience in Manitoba as a student, as a parent and as an elected member of a school board. I experienced the problems that French Canadians went through to receive their education in French.

In Manitoba, for example, the history of French Canadians has been one of fighting for their right to be educated in their own language. I can recall as a student having to hide our French grammar books whenever we had a visit from the Department of Education inspector. Mr. Speaker, this was an example of the rights of French Canadians in Manitoba.

And our premier in Manitoba continues to say that his government can ensure that the Franco-Manitoban minority will be well protected in his province. I wonder how Premier Lyon would be able to convince one of my constituents, Mr. Georges Forest, who had to go as far as the Supreme Court of Canada to fight a mere unilingual parking ticket, the product of a discriminatory provincial legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote one of the greatest political leaders this country has known, Sir John A. Macdonald who said, in 1865, during debate on the possibility of creating a Canadian confederation, and I quote the original text in English:

[*English*]

The delegates from all provinces have agreed that the use of the French language will serve as one of the principles on which confederation will be based.

[*Translation*]

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this whole question of real equality between the two founding peoples is not a new phenomenon. I think it is time to pay tribute to our forefathers by entrenching in our constitution the historic rights of all Canadians.

[*English*]

I was born in Manitoba and I have lived in Manitoba all my life, but first and foremost I am a Canadian. It might be thought that it was not necessary to say so in this House, but I am a Canadian of parentage whose maternal language was neither English nor French. I am from a lesser minority, a