

The Dalhousie
GAZETTE

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Bilingualism— A National Necessity



Mr. Ryan is a senior honours student with the French Department here at Dalhousie. He is particularly well qualified to write on this subject, and hopes to continue his studies in French literature in France next year. He argues bilingualism opens not only the door to French Canadian culture, but provides a potent force in maintaining some form of national traditions of life and thought.

The complaint that Canadian nationalism and culture are being struck a stunning and perhaps fatal blow by corresponding American forces is frequently heard on the lips of English-speaking Canadians. If we concede that such a situation exists, we must then decide whether or not some sort of historical determinism has deemed that this national and cultural absorption occur in spite of any efforts on our part. If not, we, as English-speaking Canadians, must accept personal responsibility for this crime against ourselves and must in all justice seek a remedy for our plight.

As a nation, Canada is unique, having been founded by two national groups, each possessing its own language and culture. Moreover, both the English and French elements that originally peopled Can-

ada stalwartly refused to join the United States and, today, are fused into a political unity. Yet, because of our inability to communicate completely and effectively with French Canadians in their own language, we English Canadians are in danger of cultural absorption by the United States, while French Canadians are threatened with cultural isolation.

But, one may object, if the problem is merely one of communication, the difficult really does not exist at all, for most French Canadians, being members of a minority group, are compelled to speak English. However, the essence of nationalism consists of a spiritual unity and solidarity among the people of a nation. Applied to Canada, this principle demands that we English-speaking Canadians understand and appreciate the culture, traditions, and temperament of our French-Canadian brothers. Such an awareness is contingent upon a knowledge of the French language.

By making an effort to identify ourselves more fully with a group that is largely free from American influences, we shall not only be redeeming our laxness of the past, but also be enriching ourselves. French Canadian life is a cultural treasure chest which English-speaking Canadians are largely incapable of unlocking for want of a key, bilingualism.

The doctor cannot go to the invalid in this instance. Instead, the latter must recognize the symptoms of his indisposition and then seek aid. Consequently, English-speaking Canadians must appreciate the obvious disadvantages of not being bilingual, before being capable of adopting the remedies proposed by enlightened educators. They must accept the reality that, although bilingualism is not a panacea for all of our problems, it would be a gargantuan step towards national and cultural salvation.

Technical problems have a way of eventually being solved, once the need for a solution becomes apparent. The presence of a favourable environment is an important aid in fostering bilingualism. French Canadian populations in such cities as Ottawa and Montreal are bilingual as the result of continual contact from birth with English-speaking people. Yet, the latter group, hampered by poor methods of language instruction and basking apathetically in the awareness that they are in the minority, flit along through life blissfully unaware of the special advantage that is theirs.

For the inhabitants of such non-French speaking cities as Halifax, who are at the greatest disadvantage of all, the solution would seem to be an improved method of language study, directed ideally by competent French-speaking teachers, employing the language laboratory. Such proper instruction could be implemented beneficially by nation-wide television and radio programs in both languages. Canada, possessing a publicly owned radio and television network, is in a particularly fortunate position to promote such a scheme.

No doubt, it would be unrealistic to hope to make the entire English-speaking population of Canada bilingual. Both human nature and economics present themselves as two rather dishearteningly formidable obstacles. Some will say, "I can't be bothered." Others will insist, "I haven't the time; I have to make a living."

LETTERS

... sad ...

Sir:
In the January 19th issue of the *Gazette*, in an article titled "Students' Judgments of Campus Life Harsh," several students expressed vague and, for the most part, meaningless comments on the state of student activity at Dalhousie. The inadequacy and lack of concern shown by most of these students points out the lack of concern for student government.

In my view student affairs at Dalhousie are in a sad state. The state of organization is inadequate or non-existent in many areas. Activities minimal and poorly supported. Very few students are really able to gain a worthwhile experience through participation. This is because of the lack of organization and a failure to mould student organization into truly useful bodies within the university and the community as a whole.

The fault does not lie with our Students' Council. In fact, I would like to express satisfaction with the way that this year's Council is conducting student affairs within the existing framework. Let us hope that their efforts to "houseclean" all campus organizations will result in a revival of well organized, well supported student activity.

In order to be brief I would like to itemize some areas where I feel student government is failing.

1. Liason between organizations is poor. Conflict of purpose and such things as meeting time is a result of this.
 2. The *Gazette* has not been used as effectively as it might as a means of publicizing and analyzing student activity. Remember, Dal students are living and attending lectures over a wide area. We have no real "center" of student activity. The part of the old Men's Residence so allocated is just an excuse for an organizational center.
 3. Many of the campus-wide organizations are not representative enough. Organizations such as Sodales, NFCUS, WUSC should have representatives from all faculties and residences on their committees. This is the only way that all students can be effectively informed of activities.
 4. Too many organizations are organized as "cliques." This is part of the reason for poor student support.
 5. However, too many students place more emphasis on other activities at the expense of supporting and participating in student government activities.
- It is my sincere hope that the Students' Council will not "weed," as the *Gazette's* headline stated was its intention regarding societies. I hope they can make them more effective. We need a revitalized student government.

Peter Green,
Commerce IV.

... boycott ...

Sir,
I have just received in the mail an envelope full of Liberal Party propaganda, no doubt in connection with the coming mock election here at Dal. It was immediately consigned to the trash can. I will do the same with the Conservative Party propaganda, or that of any other national political party, when it arrives. I object to our present policy of allowing them to participate in our campus election since it is well known that their activities are often subsidized recruiting drives or convenient sounding boards for the empty promises and half truths of the national organization. Recently the student council of another Canadian university recognized this fact and decided to keep the national political parties out of their mock parliament.

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It is apparent then that the greatest hope for future bilingualism lies in encouraging secondary school and university students to pursue this necessary objective with enthusiasm and tenacity. From this constantly expanding nucleus will come the architects of a Canadian culture and a Canadian way of life.

Final Plea

The Editorial Board of the *Gazette* has been sadly disappointed by the lack of interest in its Beauty Queen Contest. We have received only one nomination.

We are extending the entry deadline by one day. All nominations must be received by the Editor by Sunday, January 29, at 3:00 p.m.

The award will not be presented by acclamation. Unless at least two more nominations are received before Sunday afternoon, the Contest will be cancelled.

♦ ♦ ♦

A Ruckus with Riddles

To judge by the platforms of the two contesting parties in this week's campus elections, it would seem that students are at last going to have an opportunity to tussle with some real and vital issues during Dalhousie's annual political fracas. Happily, none of the planks are concerned with bathing canteen cats, constructing tunnels from the Arts Building to "The Shack," or removing outside lights from Shirreff Hall, all of which have been samples of Dal's political wisdom in former years.

But at the same time both platforms are woefully inadequate in their coverage of some of the issues they discuss, and it would therefore be advisable for interested voters to examine closely the ramifications of some of the advocated measures.

For example, the Progressive Conservative Party proposes to "give realistic recognition" to Red China. Before agreeing, however, that it is rank idiocy to evade recognition of 600 million souls living in a country second in area only the U.S.S.R., the voter might consider, among others, the following questions: Would the recognition of the Chinese Republic injure Canadian relations with the United States and possibly produce American retaliatory measures detrimental to the Canadian economy? Would recognition at this time compel the new administration in the U. S. to commit itself in favour of non-recognition in compliance with American public opinion, and thereby lessen the chances of Chino-American compromises in the near future? Is Canada prepared to establish diplomatic relations even if Communist China will do so only on the condition that she is admitted to the United Nations while we recognize her claims to Formosa? Would the establishment of relations with China produce a trade flow which would undermine some Canadian industries, and if so, would any tariff measures be necessary and at what cost on the international political scene? Would recognition have any effect on our relations with SEATO countries, which include, in part, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Pakistan?

Similarly, the Liberals, while prepared to contribute "appropriately" to continental defense in co-operation with the U. S., propose

that Canada withdraw from NORAD "insofar as its present interceptor role is concerned." Many Canadians would find this measure immediately attractive for no other reason than that it contains an anti-American element. But again there are further considerations. Is Canada's "interceptor role" really this ineffective? Would the American government feel that Canada was merely evading her share of continental defense costs by thrusting them upon the U. S.? Would Canadian-American relations suffer accordingly? If Canada is to permit no nuclear arms on her soil, and if she does not contribute to conventional defense armament, is there any point in perpetuating NORAD at all? If the Liberals are concerned with reducing defense spending in order to pay for increased social welfare benefits, is withdrawal from NORAD the best way of doing so, and is it adequate? Is Canadian neutralism a factor, and if so what are the merits of a neutralist policy? What will be the effect of an apparent weakening of Canadian-American relations in Africa? the Middle East? the "Western Bloc" as a whole?

On the domestic scene, the Progressive Conservatives wish to "set up a National Advisory Board to meet with representatives of the Provincial Boards of Education to equate, as near as is possible, standards in primary and secondary education." Are the provinces likely to agree to such a plan? Will such a step disrupt national unity even further by antagonizing a somewhat hostile Province of Quebec? Are educational standards merely to be "equated", or will the government attempt to improve them? Is there a possibility that federal interference in elementary education might lead to abuses of control over subject matter, in the field of Canadian history, for example? If so, what measures might have to be taken to avoid this eventuality?

The Liberals propose to tackle unemployment by providing easier credit and lower interest rates, decreasing personal taxes, improving vocational training programs, public and winter works, and by accelerating capital goods' depreciation. Where are they going to get the money? Do the measures provide only a short-run solution? If so, could a more fundamental program be devised? Do the proposed steps stimulate those industries in which the unemployment problem is most severe? Could this platform be instituted immediately, and if so, how quickly would its effects be felt?

All these questions, and many more, are raised, then, in the platforms presented by Dalhousie's two active political parties. The problems are complex, and the answers provided by both groups are simple only on the surface. Neither party has discussed them in depth. We hope they are capable of doing so.

More important, we hope that all those taking part in tomorrow's elections and in the coming Model Parliament will seize this opportunity to examine a few of Canada's foreign and domestic riddles with intelligence and concern.