

● (1642)

I say, Mr. Speaker, that it is perfectly consistent and reasonable, if a society concludes that its language and culture are endangered, to take through democratic means such legal steps as may be necessary in order to protect that language and culture, and to do all of that without—I repeat, Mr. Speaker, without—creating an attitude of distrust and distress.

It may well be the decision that Francophone Quebecers want to make, to deny themselves by some expression of opinion—an election, a referendum or whatever—of this freedom of choice. I see no reason whatever why such an option cannot be guaranteed in our constitution so that, in changing times and views, French-speaking Quebecers voluntarily and deliberately reduce or curtail these linguistic rights. However, I contend that every Canadian and, as I said earlier, every landed immigrant ought to have enshrined in our constitution the right to be unilingual and the right to be bilingual.

The hon. member for Matane will find no cause for difference of opinion with me over his Bill C-202 where it attempts to put aside injustices as he and I perceive them. We agree. He proposes, however, significant changes in federal institutions in order to achieve these changes, whereas I point out that after a hundred years the provinces still cannot seem to provide assurances of certain civil rights in the field of education. I call them civil rights because I believe that a changing, growing and maturing Canada needs to see such matters as the linguistic education of our children as civil rights to be enjoyed from sea to sea, not restricted to local and regional jurisdictions.

For that reason, I urge members on this side to give consideration to the desirability of such constitutional patriation and amendments. In so doing, I am simply saying what many other members of the Liberal party have said.

As to hon. members of the Conservative party, I suggest that once and for all—perhaps this election will be an excellent opportunity to start—Progressive Conservative members finally tell Canadians with one voice, in one statement for the whole country, not ten statements by candidates in ten different provinces, just where the party stands on an amended constitution for Canada.

As for those on this side, we stand for the principle of the protection of minority rights throughout Canada, for the provision of opportunity for equal status and equal opportunity for both official languages, not only at the federal level but at the level of all government and everywhere in Canada.

I listened to the Progressive Conservative candidate in my constituency a couple of nights ago when he supported the Parti Québécois stand on the federal budget and the sales tax. He stood arm in arm with Mr. Parizeau, the Quebec minister of Finance. Today we are discussing minority rights in the House of Commons. I see two members of the Conservative party here, neither of whom have said a word about minority rights in so far as Canada is concerned.

I complete my reference to Bill C-202 by congratulating the hon. member for Matane on an excellent piece of legislation. I do not know whether or not it will go to the committee. The

Official Languages Act

only difference between the view he has proposed and the view I propose is that, in his case, he would see minority rights placed into legislation. In mine, I would see minority rights enshrined in our constitution. I thank the House for listening.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Joyal (Maisonneuve-Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, I shall be quite brief. First, I should like to say to my colleagues of the Progressive Conservative party who are present—

[*English*]

I should like to say to the hon. member for the Conservative party who is present in the chamber that I do not share the view of my colleague from Lachine-Lakeshore (Mr. Blaker) that members of the Conservative party do not share the views and objectives of the Official Languages Act. It might be that some individual members differ in their opinion, but the vast majority of them expressed through their vote their support for the objectives of the Official Languages Act. I believe the same is true of the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt).

[*Translation*]

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I merely wish to remind the House, and particularly my colleague the hon. member for York South (Mrs. Appolloni) as well as my colleague the hon. member for Lachine-Lakeshore (Mr. Blaker), that the great majority, if not all the clauses of Bill C-202, express concerns that have already been voiced by the Official Languages Commissioner in his 6th annual report and also in the 7th which was tabled last March. As concerns the comments of the hon. member for York South, may I simply point out to her that the introductory clause of Bill C-202 that seems to worry her is exactly the same as title IV, section 38 of the constitutional provisions tabled in this House by the right hon. Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) on April 1976. Those constitutional provisions had been sent to all provincial premiers and were to serve as the basis for discussions about the revision on which every province and the federal government had agreed. So, those are not exceptional provisions in relation to the commitment made by the federal government to establish a cultural policy for each and every Canadian.

As for the other clauses of the bill, they only echo the comments made by Mr. Keith Spicer in 1977 on pages 15 and 18 of his 6th report and the recommendations included in the 7th report of the Official Languages Commissioner published in March 1978, particularly on pages 21 to 24. They are aimed at clarifying three things: on the one hand, the fact that the introductory clause of section 2 of the Official Languages Act that says that English and French both have equal status, rights and privileges, is not just a pious statement, but a legal and binding obligation in relation to every agency, department and Crown corporation concerned. They also aim at clarifying the role of the courts as far as the implementation of the Official Languages Act is concerned. This commitment only reaffirms the government's intentions, as expressed in the