

Official Languages

essential to the future of Canada, in particular for the welfare of the young people in our society. Bilingualism has become a more urgent necessity today than ever before.

Technological development, the age of cybernetics, the steady increase in the number of students in our colleges and universities, create an increasing mobility all across the country.

I think it is urgent for the French-speaking people of Quebec to feel at home everywhere in the country; they have the right to live with dignity, to express themselves in their own language, and to live their culture.

In the same line, provision must be made so that the English language remains a living language in the province of Quebec and the English-speaking people may also continue to live there in a proper climate.

When we consider what is happening now in Canada with regard to bilingualism, we note a significant fact in those parts of the country with an English-speaking majority: older people are opposed to the development of bilingualism in Canada. The English-speaking youth in schools and universities show a great deal more understanding in this field and are enthusiastic about the development of the French language and culture. They recognize in it a possible enlargement of Canadian life.

Recently I had the opportunity of visiting a few universities in so-called English-speaking provinces. I also had the opportunity of addressing various groups of young listeners.

I then had the pleasure of finding out that English-speaking youths can adopt a sympathetic and understanding attitude towards the development of the French language and culture. I stress this fact because it gives me hope for the future of our country.

I am convinced that we can make the changes necessary for the development of the bilingual wealth of Canada. We, as members of parliament, have the opportunity for encouraging that rational and civilized thinking amongst the young; we can give them a striking example of co-operation and dedication to the idea of a united and bilingual Canada. It is in that spirit that I call upon all my colleagues in this house to discuss the objects of the bill now before us.

[*English*]

I say, Mr. Speaker, that acceptance of the principle of this bill does not necessarily mean it cannot be improved upon with further study. Fears have arisen which must be

calmed. There are fears in the federal service of Canada. There are men and women who have given long service in the administration of this country who fear that because they were taken on at a time when they were unilingual they may not be given the opportunities they would have had if this new attitude and new policy had not been introduced. I do not see that there is in this bill any reason for such fear. I do not see that it is necessary to fear that one will be disadvantaged. Nevertheless, there already have been examples of the kind of thing I am referring to in Ottawa, when janitors and others have felt that as a result of the policies of this parliament they have been given less advantageous shifts or less advantageous positions or tours of duty than they would have been given if they had been bilingual. I say, Mr. Speaker, that we must make sure that one injustice is not replaced by another.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: We must make sure that the people of Canada realize that this is a matter of agreement and consent and necessity and desirability, and not a matter imposed upon them from above. Canadians who have given long service in our federal administration must be assured of security and the same chance of advancement whether they are unilingual or bilingual. The introduction of bilingual districts and of the other official language should have the support of the surrounding community. The development of the objectives of this bill can be beneficial only if it is based on consent. These aims must be nurtured like a plant lest the frost of misunderstanding kills them at the roots. Unless we make certain we do it this way, unless we persuade the Canadian people of the values and benefits of bilingualism, and unless we make certain we do not impose it on them without understanding their position, the plant may well be killed at its roots.

Above all, the commissioner to be appointed under this bill must be a wise and flexible Canadian who is animated not only by the law but also by a sense of fitness and appreciation of Canadian unity. He must have that sense if he is to make this legislation into a unifying instead of a divisive instrument. As with many other desirable laws, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that much more will depend on the administration of this law than on the wording of the bill. If the commissioner to be appointed is a hard-nosed guy who is determined to ram things down people's throats, then this measure will be a disaster