

Official Languages

their original culture, it is only because this country is a bilingual country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: It is only because this country has recognized more than one language and more than one culture since its existence. If this had been a unilingual country with only one culture, there would not have been this acceptance of multiculturalism. I am not saying that what has been done is enough, but there has been and will be an expenditure of millions of dollars in order to assist in the development of multiculturalism in Canada and the original cultures of the various communities in this country.

I say to my fellow Canadians of all origins that this is a great country. It could be greater. It has immense potential. It is important to keep it together. It is important that French-speaking Canadians feel at home everywhere in Canada as Canadian citizens. This resolution is a step in that direction. I appeal not only to all hon. members to support this resolution but to all Canadians to understand its purpose.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2120)

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, this consensus which seems to develop in this House on the occasion of this debate on the motion of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) which deals with bilingualism, I regret being unable to share it because, as I already had the opportunity to point out, time has come to face up to the situation just as it is and to attempt together to find true solutions to the real problem confronting us.

It is therefore useless to hide once more behind fine speeches and behind a principle which seems to bring solutions but which, unfortunately, does not.

I was listening a while ago to the leader of the official opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who was boasting that the principles in the motion brought in by the government came from him. I heard the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Lewis) say about the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, we know perfectly well that, although it is the Prime Minister who has decided to propose this motion and, in support of it, to state the general principles with which we are in complete agreement, which we cherish like the apples of our eyes, and which are included in the preamble, the means proposed to realize these basic principles were suggested by the leader of the opposition. Perhaps this is why they are far from being sound.

Mr. Speaker, we are in 1973, and 106 years have already elapsed since Confederation. The leader of the New Democratic Party keeps advising hon. members to be patient. We are willing to wait, but we do not want our patience to be taken for weakness.

I only want to state once more what Quebecers and French Canadians want. There is absolutely no intention to cheat anyone of his rights, of affecting in any way those who are now in the public service and who have put forth their efforts there over many years. We realize that they have a right to their jobs. We do not wish to replace those

[Mr. Lewis.]

people. What we do want is to achieve true equality in a fair and equitable manner.

Mr. Speaker, to express the feeling of a Quebecer, or of a French Canadian, and primarily in order that hon. members may understand that no animosity, nationalism or anything else is involved, I shall say that the issue is merely the freedom of the individual. Mr. Speaker, having been born in Quebec and of French Canadian parents, my universe, my country was the French language. Is it to be held against me that I was nursed by my mother who was French-speaking?

Mr. Speaker, this is something instinctive and natural. I feel really at home in this country, but little by little I discovered that the universe of my childhood was not quite the same as the one of my manhood. That is when every Quebecer wakes up and finds that he is not quite at home with the government of his country and that sometimes he is quite a stranger outside the borders of Quebec.

We don't blame anybody but we simply want, today more than ever, to take what is coming to us. Therefore, we completely agree with the principles referred to by the right hon. Prime Minister. Where we are going in different direction is when the means to reach this goal are being determined.

Mr. Speaker, the nine practical principles set out in the motion are sometimes insignificant, sometimes, stupid and sometimes again they simply sanction a situation of fact which Quebecers, French Canadians have been up against for years if not always. Here is the first of these principles:

(1) that positions which are seen, under present circumstances, as requiring the knowledge and use of both the French and English languages will be first identified, and then designated, as bilingual in the course of the period ending December 31, 1978;

Mr. Speaker, I heard today the Prime Minister explain this section a little. I felt he had been compelled to do so because as soon as the motion had been introduced, and even when the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) stated these principles last December, some people already began protesting.

● (2130)

In fact, if today in 1973, as representative of the constituency of Champlain in the House of Commons, I have to deal with various departments of the federal government, how is it that I cannot do it in my own language? And why should I be referred to some clerk assigned to the service to make up for the lack of French-speaking officials in that office?

If the problem exists at the present time and if everybody can see it, why say that it is going to be solved before 1978? That is what I cannot understand. If such a need exists now and has been known to exist for years, my patience, does not stretch that far. I believe it my duty to be proud and energetic and to express the views and the wishes of everyone of my constituents on the subject.

Here is an example of the difficulties experienced at times in the administration. This week, I had an appointment with the Canadian Patent Office. My constituent was ready to come on Wednesday or today, but since there will be a Francophone only next Tuesday in that office, we shall have to wait until next Tuesday. Perhaps some other