

*Official Languages*

always think of the citizens of both languages. I hoped in vain that the hon. member would speak about the French group, at least the one in his constituency, for there are French Canadians there, but if there are so many French groups nowadays in the western provinces, it could be, if one studies Canadian history, on account of the federal government, of the English-speaking people who thwarted them. I was told so by the French Canadians who live at present in the west. I spent evenings with them, I talked with them.

At that time, subsidies were granted to all ethnic groups from the Ukraine, Hungary, Russia, China, so that they could take over pieces of land in the west, while the French Canadians represented more than 30 or 32 per cent of the population. A certain group of English-speaking people probably got scared and that is why all assistance was refused to people from Quebec who wanted to settle in the West. Those who went there, I am not afraid to say it, paid their own way. The French Canadians who were helped, whom I have met and who come from the United States, received help precisely because they came from the United States. I met three French Canadian families who went to the United States before they came to settle in the West in order to get help.

• (5:40 p.m.)

Facts must be acknowledged, Mr. Speaker. I think that it will help the young English-speaking Canadians to understand the situation in the West. Why have approximately three million French Canadians settled in the United States? Because obstacles were put in their way and they were prevented from going out west to clear the land. These three million French Canadians should be living in the West. They are not because, I repeat, of the federal government, because of an English-speaking majority that did not want French to be spoken too much in the West. And they got their way most of the time.

I assure you that when you get the reception I got in French-speaking localities out west and when those people have an opportunity to meet sincere French Canadian members of parliament, then they open their heart. I heard old people tell old stories with tears in their eyes because that land belonged to us as much as to others and French Canadians would have been the first to clear it. If opposition had not been raised at one time efforts would certainly not be made today to have Ukrainian, Russian or some

other language recognized in the same capacity as French, in the West. That bothers me. When I hear an hon. member—who does not admit it so in public—say that he would like to see French treated the same way as Russian, Ukrainian, Chinese and Japanese in British Columbia, Saskatchewan or Alberta, I cannot agree.

In speaking in this debate I want to awaken the young English-speaking Canadians who are willing to discuss the matter. I have met young English-speaking Canadians who are open for discussion, who want to learn history. They are wondering why so many Canadians—because young people consider French Canadians as fellow Canadians—have gone across the border to settle in the United States when the farms are so beautiful out west?

They gave me the answer. The oldtimers told me what had happened, how the French Canadian groups in the Peace River district had begged for their transportation costs in our Canadian parishes. They went there at their own expense, helped by the parishioners, to take over their share of an area which was being given to Russians or to Ukrainians whose transportation and settling costs were being paid.

One has to know those historical facts to understand the bill under study, and to resolve to correct any injustice inflicted at that time. Many English-speaking people—and I congratulate them for it—through this bill, want to do justice to those who are still clamoring for their rights and begging their provincial governments, most of whom turn a deaf ear, to grant them those rights.

In fact, we consider ourselves to be every bit as Canadian as the English-speaking people in Canada. We consider our linguistic rights as important as theirs, and that is why this bill on the official languages is before us today, for which I congratulate the government.

Finally, if a government at one time denied our French-Canadians out west the right to speak French, this government is allowing them to speak French once again, to enjoy their linguistic rights, to use French at work, in court and in the federal administration offices.

Mr. Speaker, I merely want, through my intervention, to make a few things clear, because I believe that all hon. members will be interested in this question.

I had the opportunity—for which I thank parliament—of gathering information on the