

Official Languages

that would help them to maintain their language and feel increasingly at home throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, I should like once again to say that I do not want to dwell unduly on this subject, but once and for all the importance must be recognized of the services this bill could render the Canadian nation. In addition, in view of the tenor of some of the speeches, an effort should be made not to reject the claims of the members from the province of Quebec whom I personally invite to foster or work for the passing of this bill. I felt that some members were rather surprised to know that, in the province of Quebec, there existed—I shall not say unfortunately—perhaps too often circumstances or claims that worried them.

But it is time that we should recognize that Quebec is a province different from the others, whether we like it or not. It is unthinkable not to recognize that difference when we know that there are more than five million French Canadians in that province.

It is a fact that the Quebec mentality is different. The history of Quebec being different, its needs and its aspirations are different also.

But the goal of Quebecers, as that of all Canadians, is for the vast majority to live in a well-organized Canada and a well-organized province of Quebec, while hoping for a similar organization in the other provinces. Quebecers are perfectly justified in demanding the recognition of certain rights and I do not believe that the representatives of the province of Quebec deny that there are also differences with the other provinces.

It is urgent to recognize those differences in that province, taking into account its mentality. But once again the objective of Quebec is to build a strong and well-organized province for the good of Canada. I have always maintained that that strength and the development of the provinces will assure the greatness of Canada.

The bill under consideration is surely supported by a majority of hon. members. Let all those who are worried be reassured. The bill is as important as all those we have already adopted, because it recognizes a language that has been forgotten for too long.

The bill asks for the recognition of the history of Canada, this country built by two founding peoples which were joined by New Canadians who are perfectly welcome in Canada and who have contributed to the country's greatness.

In conclusion, I wish to say that I shall be very happy to vote for the bill, not with politics in mind, but from the conviction that I co-operate in the passing of a measure that all French Canadians have long been waiting for, and that the majority will accept in the best interest of Canada. It will ensure better understanding and will best prove that we really want a united country.

[*English*]

Mr. William Skoreyko (Edmonton East):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in the debate this evening because I wish to register some points of view on the bill before us and to place certain objections on record. In addition, I wish to express what I believe to be a legitimate concern on my part as to the contents of this measure.

I am concerned about the reasons for this legislation. I firmly believe that this bill is a retrograde step as far as the unity of Canada is concerned. I think it is divisive in its effect, and that it will divide ethnic groups across the country. There groups will no longer feel themselves to be part of the Canadian concept. In my view the bill is unnecessary because we already have the freedom and the right to use our languages on a national basis. I hold this bill to be politically motivated and nothing more than an election gimmick.

I am further concerned as to the legality of this measure. On this issue I wish to raise only two points to strengthen the arguments put forward by my hon. friend from Churchill (Mr. Simpson). On November 12 of last year the Hon. J. T. Thorson, an eminent lawyer in the City of Ottawa, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of this country (Mr. Trudeau) raising two points against the bill. He stated them as follows:

1. The bill represents an attempt to amend the constitution of Canada as regards the use of the English and French languages so that it falls within one of the stated exceptions to the legislative jurisdiction of parliament under section 91 of the British North America Act; and

2. Section 133 of the British North America Act limits the status and use of the French language in Canada so that any attempt, whether by parliament or by the legislatures, to extend the use of that language by legislation is repugnant to that provision and therefor *ultra vires*.

In his attempt to answer Thorson adequately the Prime Minister stated that Bill C-120 in no way purports to amend the constitution. He drew attention to the guaranteed rights of the French language under the statute, and I