

associations. Through the vehicle of the National Joint Commission, it will remain under continual scrutiny.

I have had a personal commitment for some time to the principles of bilingualism in this country. I had the responsibility for negotiating the Official Languages Act with the attorneys general of the provinces, particularly the provinces in western Canada and Quebec. I had some responsibility for negotiating its passage through parliament. I spoke during the Speech from the Throne debate on January 9, and have tried to give voice to my feelings on this crucial subject on every occasion when I found it legitimate to do so.

I believe that the resolution enshrines a series of principles in the application of the Official Languages Act that are fundamental to national unity. I believe the English speaking majority in this country must try to understand the hopes and feelings of the minority in terms of the future of this country. The French speaking minority must try, on their part, to understand the intense tolerance of the English speaking majority and the considerable progress that has been made in order to equalize opportunities within the Public Service of Canada.

I do not for a moment underestimate the human difficulties encountered in trying to make this policy work. It must work and it must work fairly. It must work because the future of this country is at stake. It must work fairly because we are dealing with men and women who are dedicating their lives to the public service of their country. In terms of the constituency and region I represent, nowhere is it more important that these principles be made to work. As I have said to my constituents on several occasions, without national unity, without a country, the city of Ottawa does not make any sense at all. We in the capital have a special burden, and yet a unique challenge to make it happen and make it work.

Re-affirmation in this House of Commons of these specific principles to convert the theory of the Official Languages Act into practice and working rules will, in my submission, go far toward re-assuring both those who fear bilingualism in the public service is going ahead too fast and those who are concerned that it is not going ahead fast enough. No one has ever claimed that the implementation of this policy would be easy nor that it would not arouse apprehension. The purpose of this resolution is to attempt to relieve that apprehension. Nor has it been claimed that it would not add to the cost of government. It is one of the prices we pay for being Canadian. I believe it is a price well worth paying against the limitless prospects of a united country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I intend to place before the House and the country my views in respect of this matter clearly and unequivocally. Throughout the years I have been in public life I have devoted myself to the unity of our country.

And long before many of those sitting in this House were born, in 1922, when it was unpopular to do so, I took an appeal on behalf of the French school trustees in the province of Saskatchewan. One always remembers the cases he has won. That case is reported. Through the years

Official Languages

I have devoted myself to assuring in this country an exemplification of the meaning of national unity.

I shall be referring a little later to the remarks of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). Before doing that, I want to deal with a speech I delivered in this House on February 4, 1963. A portion of it was quoted by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) the other day. In that speech I quoted the words uttered by Sir John A. Macdonald in this House in 1890. I quote:

I have no accord with the desire expressed in some quarters that, by any mode whatever, there should be an attempt made to oppress the one language or to render it inferior to the other. I believe that would be impossible if it were tried, and it would be foolish and wicked if it were possible.

I quoted that with approval. That was the attitude of the government I had the honour to lead in this country. That was the attitude throughout. At that time I said, and I quote:

Today we proudly call ourselves Canadian citizens enjoying every attribute of freedom and sovereignty.

Confederation was achieved by a partnership of English speaking and French speaking men who believed that the destiny of the north half of this continent might be achieved in unity but not in uniformity. But for the fundamental agreements expressed in section 133 of the British North America Act, with its assurance of the rights of language in this country, and section 91 and 92 assuring to the provinces their jurisdiction over education and culture, there never would have been a Canada . . .

Canada, under confederation, has prospered and grown. There have, however, arisen from time to time—periodically it takes place—questions as to whether Canada, as she approaches the close of the first century of confederation, has achieved the full measure of the vision of the fathers of confederation. It is with this thought in mind that the government has decided to propose the calling of a federal-provincial conference, and invitations to such a conference will be dispatched to the governments of the ten provinces at once.

The scope of the conference will be of the fullest breadth. It will be asked to study ways and means of repatriating the constitution, the problem of adequate representation in the public service, Crown corporations and other government agencies; the recommendations in the Therrien report; the choice of a national flag and other symbols of our national sovereignty. In brief, the conference will be asked to examine biculturalism and bilingualism in a comprehensive manner.

I then went on to say it had been suggested a royal commission could do that. I opposed a royal commission. In light of events, I leave it to the country to conclude who was right. The royal commission cost \$10 million. The result of that royal commission has been divisions in this country unequalled in all the years since confederation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I then went on to say:

In correcting any injustices that might be found we shall destroy prejudice and misunderstanding. We are ready to take action to deal firmly and positively with any danger which confronts the basis of the Canadian confederation.

This is a task to which all Canadians can give their willing allegiance . . .

To the original French and English strains in the Canadian population there have now been added many Canadians of other origins. They have come of their own choice to this country and have become members of the Canadian family, bringing with them their traditions and rich heritages of culture. By their contributions they have enriched, deepened and diversified the cultures of this nation.