

It is therefore from that point of view, perhaps a little too regional in aspect, that I propose to make a few remarks.

In my capacity as a Canadian of French origin, born in the province of Nova Scotia which in 1604 was host to the first French settlers in Canada, and more especially as a representative in this house of some 80,000 people of Nova Scotia that are recognized throughout the world as "Acadians", I feel I have a duty to state how Nova Scotia Acadians feel toward problems that are now menacing this country's unity, after the Parti Québécois was elected in Quebec on November 15 last.

[English]

Honourable senators, although the main thrust of my remarks will bear on the Acadians of Nova Scotia, I am in no way oblivious of the fact that there are equally important and even more important French-speaking minorities in the other provinces of Canada. Nor do I want in any way to slight the feelings of the other ethnic groups, all of whom, in my estimation, contribute substantially to the richness of the Canadian mosaic.

In Nova Scotia the distribution of the Acadian population is not uniform and therefore it is difficult to obtain a consensus of opinion from them. There are three main areas in which we find concentrations of Acadians. One is in the southwestern part of the province and the two others are in the Cape Breton and Antigonish areas. The Acadian, by nature, is an industrious and adept worker and will usually seek employment wherever it is available. For that reason, many are scattered throughout the province. For instance, in Halifax there are nearly 22,000 Acadians. I usually make it my business to contact as many of them as I can, and it is my opinion that, by and large, they view the current unrest in Canada in terms of the relationship between French and English with grave apprehension. There is no doubt that the threatened separation of the province of Quebec from the rest of Canada looms as a disquieting black cloud on the horizon, and one which they do not want. Like all other Nova Scotians, with whom they now blend so well, they sense a weakening of the economic climate in the province should there ever be a breakdown of Confederation, and they also foresee another disaster for them as far as their cultural and linguistic rights are concerned. Therefore, first and foremost, they want a united Canada, and they will categorically oppose any movement within Canada designed to weaken its unity.

● (2030)

However, I would be less than truthful if I were to insinuate in any manner that the Acadians of Nova Scotia are completely devoid of sympathy for those in Quebec who strive to protect their own cultural and linguistic rights. Having themselves experienced the erosion of their culture over the years, they recognize the need and the wisdom of the French majority in Quebec establishing now sound basic principles which will safeguard their culture in the years ahead.

[Translation]

After all, it is a well-known fact that French-speaking minorities have suffered throughout the years because of the

assimilation of their culture. The last census indicates, for instance, that there are 80,222 Acadians in Nova Scotia. Of these, only 39,335 put down French as their mother tongue, which means that 40,887 Acadians have become anglicized. The Fédération des Francophones hors Québec, of which the Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia is a member, has just published a report entitled "The Heirs of Lord Durham" which foresees that within the next 25 years 71 per cent of French-speaking people outside Quebec will be anglicized. According to this report which, as a matter of fact, draws a gloomy but true picture of the situation of French Canadians outside Quebec in the nine Canadian provinces where French is the language of minorities, there are 1,417,265 Francophones who are Canadian born. Of these, only 924,790 claim French as their mother tongue. According to these same statistical data which have been drawn from the 1971 census, one out of every four Francophones who indicated French as their mother tongue is no longer using this language; therefore, only 675,210 Francophones outside Quebec are still using French in their daily life.

This report, which is certainly the best documented work on the French-speaking minorities in Canada since the Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, sounds the alarm and warns us that the time has come for us to act if we want to preserve what remains of our culture. I consider therefore as quite natural that Acadians should feel very strongly about the decline of the French culture in Canada and be ready to do the utmost to contribute to its renewal, both in Quebec and outside Quebec.

[English]

On the other hand, being staunch supporters of the concept of Canadian unity, they do not associate the need in Quebec for the preservation of cultural and linguistic rights with the need for separation from Canada. They hope, as do the majority of Canadians, that the malaise currently rampant in Quebec will be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned, and within the framework of the Canadian Confederation.

As to the aspirations of my area, they are purely and simply tied to the development of the area as a whole. There is no desire on the part of Acadians to be treated as an isolated group in terms of regional development, nor is there any way to do so. The fabric of the society in southwestern Nova Scotia is closely knit and is made up of the various racial elements found in the area. The word "assimilation" has become of late a household word, but that is not to say that it is something that all Acadians seek to avoid.

Due to the fact that English is the dominant language and that Acadians are bilingual, linguistic difficulties are all but eliminated in the conduct of business everywhere in the community—in the fields of finance; of government, both provincial and municipal; of communications; and in practically all socioeconomic activities. This is a situation which necessarily confronts any ethnic minority which fate has placed within the confines of an English majority. However, there are rewarding merits in that both communities can work together. As a matter of fact, one of the serious factors which complicates the