

Official Languages

I find that there are in this country some blind people who wish to lead other blind people. I also find that some opposition members have been moderate, logical and reasonable in their comments, like the last speaker.

When I came to this house in September last, I was under the false impression—and I recognize it now—that the 28th legislature would be characterized by rapid progress in the field of social justice. Alas, the wailing we have heard from the opposition during this first session clearly indicates that in spite of the good dispositions of the government, some hon. members are bent not on working for the national interest, but on filibustering, embarrassing others and making a fuss about everything and nothing. But if I am a little disappointed by such behavior, I am still firmly convinced that the time is ripe to consider the immediate implementation of institutional bilingualism in Canada.

I had not intended to take part in this debate, for I do not have to be convinced of the value of the official languages bill.

[English]

I do not need to be convinced of the good to be derived from this bill. I am bilingual, yet I am a Canadian first and foremost. Nevertheless, I was born a French Canadian, and it did not just so happen that I am bilingual; my father was not fluent in the English language. Yet he was a tolerant man and had an open mind. I had the good fortune to be brought up next to an English speaking family. They learned French from us and we learned English from them. And we got along extremely well. Those were the days, Mr. Speaker. One of those English speaking boys next door today holds a master's degree in French and is a superintendent of schools in New Brunswick. And I, as a French speaking Canadian from the province of New Brunswick, was for some two years English announcer in Fredericton for the radio network of the C.B.C.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Corbin: Thus, I have no problem in appreciating the importance of this bill.

My riding is also bilingual. At one extremity there are people who have never spoken one word of French and cannot understand the language. At the other there are French Canadians who do not understand much English; some of them do not understand one word of the language. Yet we get along pretty well because we respect each other and the

[Mr. Corbin.]

cultural values for which we stand. We also respect the valiant citizens of New Denmark who have held on to their Danish traditions, their language and their songs of faith. Their sons marry our daughters and our women marry their men. We also respect, in Madawaska-Victoria, our native people, the Maliseet Indians of Tobique and of Edmundston, who undertook last summer, with the assistance of the New Brunswick government, to learn to speak their forefathers' language which had been forgotten by all but a fortunate few, and to pass it on to their children.

[Translation]

When I hear some opposition members speak in exaggerated and excessive terms, I can hardly believe that they have the country's interest at heart. As far as I am concerned, when I do not know anything about a particular problem, I let others enlighten me, but I agree it is their privilege to spread their ideas to the four cardinal points, if they want to. No doubt these mustard-seeds will be blown far away. However, it is sad to know that their prejudices will, even now, take root in the mind and heart of young Canadians, of innocent souls.

Fortunately, our democracy and our parliamentary system can preserve us for ever from a racial confrontation such as the bloody riots that happened at Caraquet, in New Brunswick at the turn of the century when the majority wanted to impose unjust laws on the French minority.

I took notice of the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who, as it happens, is absent at this moment. According to *Hansard* of Friday, May 16, here is what he said, and I quote:

● (3:20 p.m.)

I suggest that very little effort has really been made to ensure that the people of the country understand what this bill is about and that very little effort has really been made to remove the misapprehensions concerning what the bill will do. It is very important that the bill not be launched in an atmosphere of apprehension and concern in many parts of the country.

Then why such blame on the part of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker? I cannot agree with him although he accepts the principle of the bill.

It is true that it is always possible to do more, to do better. It is also possible to do less. I would point out to the Leader of the Opposition, if he were here, that if he looked immediately to his right, to his left and on