Criminal Code

phones that the government protects the rights of the English-speaking minority in Quebec against the so-called adverse effects of Bill 101 in that province.

If it wants to be honest with the citizens, and I hope it does, the federal government should do everything necessary to ensure the passage of this bill without delay and do justice to Francophones who have been patiently waiting for that for 110 years. Mr. Speaker, harmony in Canada is made up of many little details and if we keep them in mind we will reach our objective so that each and every Canadian will consider himself equal to others, whatever his language, his religion and the province where he lives.

I have always considered I was lucky to be a Quebecker and a Canadian and I am proud of it and never shall I accept to grovel before anyone, before other Canadians, whatever their origin or their language. I for one, Mr. Speaker, do not think that we can turn a Francophone into an Anglophone or an Anglophone into a Francophone, but with good will both can become good Canadians. This has always been the ideal of the founder of the Social Credit Party of Canada, the late Réal Caouette, who in his own words has always promoted that ideal throughout Canada.

I consider I am in the right direction in supporting the principle of that bill. Having made my remarks in the few minutes the House has put at my disposal—and I thank the minister for his attention because too often we must deplore the lack of attention from ministers and since we have a minister for a change, a member of the executive who is here listening to hon. members' remarks on this bill, I think we should thank him for his attention. This is how I consider that the business of this House should be conducted and that before our country, before all the people who look at us sometimes on television, because our debates are televised, we should make sure that our remarks become more and more serious and sincere so that the people paying dearly for the administration of our country be at least convinced that we are serious, that we are doing the utmost to give our country the best possible administration, with full justice towards all Canadians, whether they speak English, French or any other language.

Mr. Speaker, we are often blamed for opposing everything and being against every bill introduced by the majority, by the executive. I hope that for once radio and television will tell the whole population of Canada that the opposition approves this bill, wants to see it adopted, but most of all to see it in application, otherwise I will protest as a Canadian against the fact that it will have been sheer hypocrisy and in that case I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I will come down hard on the executive.

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, the significance of the bill we are debating today goes far beyond its legal implications. Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, in 1978, on this fourth day of May, the House has just realized that it must suppress one of the most blatant if not despicable injus-

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

tices in this country which some people dare call bicultural or bilingual. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is appropriate on this occasion to mention certain historical facts when it has taken so much time to find a solution to the most elementary problem of justice concerning the most elementary freedom, that of being allowed to defend oneself in one's own language. Mr. Speaker, the proverb says better late than never, but we must admit it is often too late. If we analyse the immediate reasons which finally prompted the government to introduce this legislation, we must realize that it was forced by the events, because of very particular circumstances. We can wonder today whether the government would have presented this bill had not something happened in Quebec in 1976. Would the government have been in such a hurry to pass this bill if the Association des Francophones hors Quebec had not suddenly felt a new strength following events and positive and determined affirmations in Quebec? Would the government, Mr. Speaker, have deigned to consider this major and fundamental problem, which I insist is of a basic nature, if Quebec had not passed Bill 101?

● (1622)

Mr. Speaker, of course I am pleased to see that at last the injustice has been acknowledged and that some attempt to remedy this situation is being made. Nevertheless, how far will that action carry if you analyse the motivations and the reasons which have led to the introduction of this bill? I am even under the impression that it was drafted rather hastily if I consider that the French version is just a translation of the original English text. Once again, and perhaps the minister could let me know if I am wrong, I think that this bill which purports to defend the interests of Francophones in this country had to be drafted in English first. Furthermore, in view of the fact that hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) who is a Francophone from outside Quebec fighting for the rights of his fellow Francophones made his intervention earlier mostly in English, I am led to feel quite skeptical about the whole thing, Mr. Speaker. Yet it is high time for us to realize that Canadians, be they French- or English-speaking and especially if they are French-speaking, certainly have no reasons for harbouring inferiority complexes especially from an historical point of view since they were the founders of this country.

Being the representative of a riding which bears the name of the very founder of our country, Champlain, it is for me an honour, Mr. Speaker, to underline these historical facts. Yet, what I do not agree with in the presentation of such bill is again the fact that something is going to be granted to us as a result of a definite attempt to prevent French Canadians from expressing even further their collective self-determination and participation in the future of this country. Mr. Speaker, if these are the feelings which motivate the government in introducing this bill I suggest it will not solve Canada's problems because to solve such problems you just do not do some