

*Official Languages*

We can say that a society gives its full contribution and progresses normally when its dynamic internal forces help maintain a constant balance between its cultural and linguistic structures, having regard to the unceasing pressures exerted both from inside and outside.

Culture and language embrace all aspects of human life, all human institutions, among which religion, education, industry and commerce are not the least.

If we recognize the merit of those remarks, we are compelled to conclude that most French Canadians are strangers in the greater part of the Canadian territory, and even in their own bastion, Quebec.

A culturo-linguistic community, to operate normally, needs reasonably homogeneous structures and fundamentally self-animating, self-creating and self-regenerating social dynamics. Its institutions and national life must express their homogeneity and this internal functional harmony. Its inventiveness and creativeness should proceed mainly from interaction among all the forces at work within its structures.

It is recognized that no cultural change could occur without the creative activity of actual persons, sensitive to internal and external influences. However, if an extraneous influence overwhelms and supplants the interior dynamics, a serious unbalance results.

And immediately we can ask ourselves, if even a normal, homogeneous and self-creating society, as the French society, for instance, feels threatened by the influence exerted by strong foreign cultures, how could an abnormal, heterogeneous and imitative society as that of French Canada hope to survive? That is indeed a most timely question. However, one thing is sure: if we choose to answer in the negative, the solution to the French-Canadian problem becomes very simple. That solution would be to have all the French Canadians totally assimilated to the Anglo-American culture, as soon as possible, and to forget once and for all the dream of a bilingual and bicultural Canada from sea to sea.

French-Canadian society is an unusual society because its internal social dynamics or its self-generating forces are too weak to enable it to change while remaining itself, or to change without distorting too much the image it has of itself. It is terribly weakened by the heterogeneity of its linguistic and cultural structures which is a kind of Franco-Anglo-American hodge-podge. It is threatened at the

very core of its Quebec fortress, i.e. Montreal, by a real Trojan horse, namely, the English Quebec which, in spite of its low representation in numbers, is infinitely more powerful than the French majority. Therefore, there exists, at the very core of this French-Canadian society, a foreign body whose dynamic social power permeates visibly, gradually and inevitably all the fields of the French life. In the modern world, industry and trade are very powerful structures that extend their tentacles in all the others structures which make up the linguistic and cultural environment. When a language, as is the case of the French language in Quebec, must continually express the structures of a foreign culture, in this instance, the English culture, together with what remains of its own cultural roots, it ill serves both groups and, indeed, is rejected by both ethnical elements involved.

It is exactly what is happening in Quebec at this time and in Canada as a whole. French Canadians themselves despise their own language because they realize it is neither fish nor fowl. They know it is a hybrid thing, a mishmash because it naturally springs from a hybrid culture. Did not the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) himself, describe it not so long ago, as a lousy French?

● (4:10 p.m.)

English Canadians, and more particularly English-speaking Quebecers, have every reason to reject any idea of imitation or association with the monster that is French—or rather “franglais”—all the more as it is of their own making. Human psychology teaches us that sound individuals are not inclined to imitate or compete with weak or crippled people. The same holds true in respect of peoples' psychology.

In short, the French Canadian today is saying to himself: I loathe myself and I wander as a lost soul. I am just beginning to understand the dynamic forces that moulded me and, from the bottom of my heart, I wish for the transformation of those structures, so that, at last, I may be able to identify myself with my essential image. But fundamentally, the only real question boils down to this: Would it be that my cause is hopeless?

In that perspective, it is important to note the following facts. French-Canadian demographers forecast that within 15 years, the majority of the population of greater Montreal will be English-speaking, if the present birth-rate trend is maintained among French Canadians, and if the assimilation of new