

*Official Languages*

should naturally—and I say naturally—integrate themselves into one of the two cultures. This does not mean that these groups must forget their language or their customs, but, to my mind, Canada will be strong and great if the two founding groups are recognized.

All those who came to Canada will be able to make their contribution, the effects of which will be most valuable while deserving our gratitude and appreciation.

We should recognize the principle that Canada was built by two founding peoples while acknowledging this diversity of cultures. As for those who would have us believe that we could become a multilingual country, considering the proportion of new Canadians here, let me answer that such a policy would simply help build a tower of Babel. It would be coward to encourage the dreams of the various ethnic groups in this respect and allow them to preserve their illusions.

It is therefore my duty, since we have to work in the most objective and fairest possible way, to request all members to accept once and for all this bill which will extend to the whole country the recognition of the French language and will allow the minorities, whether French or English, to express themselves and to participate in the business of the country in their mother tongue.

To those who speak of priorities and wonder if it would not be advisable to try to delay this debate by suggesting that adopting other bills might be more urgent, I shall answer that every law brought before parliament is indeed, important and the need for its adoption always pressing. But I certainly could not accept the opinion of those who would merely play politics and delay this debate by requiring the government to recognize other priorities or to introduce other legislations.

The best and most efficient way of working in the best interest of the country and trying to achieve, as soon as possible, this unity which we have so far never attained is to pass the bill and to proceed as soon as possible to the consideration of other bills likely to be also very useful to all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, there is no need to dwell very long on the bill, for it looks advisable to me that it should be passed. I do not think it is necessary to say that I support the bill for the pleasure of supporting the government. Let no one think that I want to please the government but, as a member of the opposition, I submit that we also have the responsibility of taking part in the adoption of valuable

[Mr. La Salle.]

parliamentary legislation and it is my duty to participate in the administration of the government. The opposition has a part to play in forcing the government into acting more quickly, whenever the legislation is valuable and advisable. I sincerely think that, in the interests of all Canadians and particularly French Canadians, it is urgent, advisable and desirable to pass the bill.

On the other hand, if unfortunately this debate were to drag on, I would have to ask myself this question: what is there for me to do here as a French-speaking member of parliament? I am convinced that the majority of hon. members recognize the significance of this bill for the future of this country, for the sake of the kind of justice which we are recommending and for which we are working. In view of those circumstances, I think that we will be sufficiently objective and straightforward to get this bill accepted as soon as possible throughout Canada.

As I said, it is agreed that the intention of this bill is not to impose the French language to those who do not want to learn it. However, I believe it is designed so that those willing to do so will be able to learn and practice it as soon as possible.

Personally, I did not hesitate on my arrival in this house to speak a second language, with which I am not very familiar. The results may not be the most satisfactory so far, but at least I do my best to be able, in the near future, to talk with my English-speaking friends in their own language, so as to be better understood and to prove that in Canada the two founding nations can get along and seek the same objectives.

When we recognize these differences, whether we admit it or not, I think that we will then be in a better position to understand one another and, consequently, to accept one another more easily and to work together, while retaining our different mentalities, speaking a different language perhaps, in order to reach that ideal which is to build a strong, well-structured Canada, with strong provinces as well.

• (9:20 p.m.)

I did not want to miss this opportunity to take part in this debate, for my fellow-citizens in Quebec as well as the minorities in the other provinces have needs which must be met. Those people want greater opportunities. Indeed, as a result of a recent trip out west, I realized this. They should have, as soon as possible, a French television station