

The Address—Mr. R. Gauthier

(Translation):

Mr. Rosaire Gauthier (Chicoutimi): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to tender my sincere congratulations to the hon. members of this house for the trust the people of Canada placed in them at the federal elections, as well as my best wishes so that all decisions and all legislation in this house be taken and passed in the best interest of the Canadian nation.

My feelings and wishes are, without doubt, those of the people in my riding of Chicoutimi, which I have the honour to represent in this nation's parliament.

My speech will contain no bitter criticism, but rather the expression of a few wishes dear to the heart of the people of my riding and also dear to every Canadian of good will.

From the very beginnings of the Canadian confederation, the fundamental force which has impelled our Canadian people and the gallant political leaders who have governed the country—more particularly the Right Hon. Mr. St. Laurent, to whom I am happy to express our esteem, gratitude and admiration for what he so magnificently accomplished in our great country—has indeed been this deep-rooted trend towards a genuine and rational national unity, that is to say unity in diversity, for it does seem that the two great racial groups of our country will never unite to the point of making up a single people with a single mentality. So it was the fundamental tendency of our governments to cause our two main racial groups to constitute a national community united by bonds of human fellowship, the harmony of well-understood liberties and the respect of the democratic scale of values.

Today, after more than a century of common wishes and endeavours, after more than a century of common undertakings in the direction of true national unity, do we not sense, all of us, the undefinable feeling that this national unity must be a truly living reality in the heart of every Canadian.

On the other hand, if we do have that first feeling, we cannot escape another. We know that this unity is still threatened by certain prejudices which have the unfortunate effect of lessening it, of weakening it, and often of threatening it in its fundamental principles. Still I hope that it will never be thought that in this country, there is the west and the east. We should rather think that, notwithstanding the faults committed in the past, we form one country. These faults have been committed, and we can do little but accept them as they were. In any event the west is necessary to the east, as the east itself is just as necessary to the west. Moreover what

[Mr. Ricard.]

affects one province also affects this country as a whole. Let there be no drawing back on our part. We must convince ourselves that it is absolutely indispensable for the Canadian people to understand how necessary it is to present a common front and to unite in every field of human endeavour, individually, collectively and nationally.

That is why I express the hope that the legislation which is to be adopted here will always take into account the meaning of true and authentic national unity.

(Text):

Besides, this unity which I have just mentioned, will not be complete unless and until full general bilingualism is achieved in this country. I do not mean a complacent, diplomatically self-seeking, limited or superficial bilingualism. Our national unity will be a living fact when we shall have live bilingualism, in complete mutual respect and admiration, a bilingualism which is alive and realistic.

I therefore express the wish that future legislation affecting in any way the issue of national interest may fully honour the principles I just stated; and only at such time as our laws, in their spirit and administration, imply general bilingualism will our national unity really progress toward the completeness we all hope for.

In spite of all this, our national unity will not be perfect without the contribution to our national heritage of a distinctive flag, a symbol of maturity, independence and sovereignty; for, even if our country is recognized as having the characteristics of an independent and free nation, these attributes are scarcely believable when it is considered that this nation is deprived of its first symbolic expression, namely a distinctive and characteristic flag which would achieve our common ideal.

This doubt, which many Canadians feel, is not, I believe, the expression of prejudices. It is not a sign of disrespect towards certain great nations to which we are deeply attached by blood, traditions, culture and memories. Nor does it reflect a lack of admiration for those great nations. On the contrary, the collective desire to obtain in the near future a distinctive and typically Canadian flag is a sign of national maturity.

When a nation reaches that stage of national maturity, as Canada has now done it requires all the means of expression which characterize and identify an adult nation. When a nation is in possession of those means