

*Official Languages Act*

but as a matter of right, provides all social services in both official languages from public funds . . . This was the result of legislation.

Madam Speaker, I see that my time is up. Before sitting down, I would like to thank my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier, on behalf of the whole Official Opposition team, for his tremendous work and the cooperation he has given the Government. From the outset, the Leader of our Party stated our intention to support this Bill and the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier was the one mainly responsible for studying the Bill. I wish to thank him for that and congratulate him for the terrific job he has done.

● (1730)

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part today in the debate on Bill C-72, especially after my colleague the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) and also the Hon. Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Hamelin). I think that all Members in this House will recognize the tremendous work done by that man over a little more than a year on Bill C-72. Thanks to him the legislation came through as it now stands and as it looks acceptable to us of course, without the amendments moved.

The matter could be dealt with under various angles, Madam Speaker. We could look for various reasons to take heart, point to various aspects showing that the Bill is a tremendous step forward in the recognition of our Canadian language duality, not only for Francophones but also for Anglophones and all Canadians in this country.

I think the essential feature or one of the essential features of the Canadian reality is its bilingual and multicultural nature. And when dealing with Bill C-72, it is fitting in my view that we remember all those who before us, often in the face of great difficulty, and the last time having been in 1969, worked for the official recognition of both languages. It is my view that the country they built, Madam Speaker, holds a very special place in the world thanks to its features, especially its language features.

It is my personal view that courage and determination are needed to build a country, develop it and to give it a greater degree of security and prosperity than we ourselves enjoyed. But more is needed—generosity and also, today especially, Madam Speaker, tolerance. Nothing durable survived in this country unless it was two-dimensional, with the co-operation and above all the respect of both communities.

[*English*]

There is not and there cannot be in Canada only one language or only one culture. There cannot be only one way of doing things, of saying or thinking things in Canada. I could say more. But there must always be only one objective for all Canadians: the unity and the prosperity of this country. The official linguistic minorities in Canada are well aware that the battle for justice and equity is a long one and that it is not over

yet. It will not be won by any glorious action, nor will it be won by a long constitutional or political battle.

The battle will be long because it deals with issues that are emotional for all Canadians. We can all say to each other here that by voting for Bill C-72 we will have progressed in the cause for linguistic justice in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, it is important to state here, as I feel I have a duty to do so, in what context we have to deal with amendments to Bill C-72, and my wish is to do so with the least possible degree of frustration and emotion. But it is extremely difficult for a French-speaking Member of this House, whose forebears for 350 years fought for the recognition of one's language, to try and understand why someone might wish through a series of amendments to weaken, slow down and even paralyze in certain circumstances the development of a bilingual Canada.

I think that attempt can only be understood by referring to attitudes and concepts that were more in use in this country some 20 years ago, but no longer appear to reflect Canadian realities. In my opinion, this shows that by updating this legislation which dates back to 1969, this Conservative Government has the courage and the will to make the defense of linguistic rights and cultural minorities priority in its approach to the future.

Madam Speaker, I suggest it is very important . . . I feel I am a richer man today for having had the opportunity over the past four years to learn another language. I must admit it was not always easy.

[*English*]

English has been the key that has permitted me to discover a new country, a new Canada. I have many good friends in places that I did not know existed not too long ago.

● (1740)

I am trying to say that we must not see bilingualism as the only means by which we will give justice to our official linguistic minorities, important as that may be. I think the younger generations of Canadians today all over the country—which is the wonderful part of the new Canada—have shown us something. I had the experience as the Secretary of State of travelling back and forth across the nation two years ago and saw how our young Canadians have taught us that bilingualism is, in fact, an opportunity for our personal and collective development.

There is not a more obvious proof of this new spirit and tolerance than the Meech Lake Accord concluded between all the Canadian provinces and the federal Government. I recognize that Québec constitutes a distinct society within Canada and the linguistic duality is a fundamental distinction that we must protect. This Accord did not happen overnight. This Accord exists because it was inspired by realism, because