

and the United States as being two countries that share the same language but differ widely in cultural background. He said:

They have most words in common but the words do not necessarily mean the same thing.

Mr. Blackburn said that satisfactory communication and understanding can only come from two groups thoroughly understanding each other's cultural backgrounds and from experience. All these factors, Mr. Speaker, make me wonder whether this bill is nothing more than an empty gesture, a futile attempt to achieve something foredoomed to failure by the immutable facts of the world in which we find ourselves.

• (8:50 p.m.)

As I said at the outset, Mr. Speaker, I support this amendment simply because I believe it would make a bad bill a little better. It is now apparent that the government's majority and the stubbornness of its leaders make passage of the legislation inevitable. The best we who oppose it can do in the circumstances is to try to make it less objectionable, and hopefully less discriminatory.

In closing, I would simply like to quote another leading thinker and writer from the province of Quebec, Claude Ryan, editor of *Le Devoir*. He said, as reported in *Canada Month* magazine:

Quebeckers would like to have the best of two worlds, you know. They would like to be as free as possible—and I set no limit here. And on the other hand they want to be as comfortable and prosperous as the rest of North America, in particular the more prosperous parts of North America.

I echo those sentiments, Mr. Speaker, and to them I say "amen". But if the people of Quebec and the rest of French Canada are to find the freedom and the just share in North American prosperity to which they are entitled I do not believe it will be by means of artificial contrivances such as the bill now before us. They cannot find what they seek through legislative measures that will only end by segregating them behind legalistic barbed wire on isolated language reservations. They will not find it by accepting a false and unjust position of preferment. Neither the French people of this country nor the unity of Canada can come fully into their own on the basis of injustice and discrimination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Secretary of State.

Mr. Alexander: Some hon. members "Oh, oh."

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I had made up my mind to speak in French to avoid the rather troublesome and, on the whole, rather vulgar, interruptions my colleague, the Minister of Justice, had to put up with earlier while he was quietly and soberly expressing his point of view.

I see that my decision was justified because I had hardly opened my mouth that I heard coming from the other side of the house certain noises hardly identifiable, which did not make any sense to me, perhaps because did not have any, which would not surprise me a bit.

At this point of the debate, I should like to point out a number of particulars on two interventions: First of all, the one from the sponsor of the amendment that is before us now, the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) and then, the more surprising one and the least explainable, from the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie).

I merely wish to clarify some points because during this debate, Mr. Speaker, a certain number of statements were made which neither the facts nor the bill under study can justify.

For instance, the hon. member for Crowfoot stated, on the basis of a very fragmentary and truncated quotation taken from a newspaper article, that I had said that I believed it necessary for all federal public servants to become bilingual. That is pure fantasy. Because I have said, on many occasions, that there was an obvious need in the Canadian public service for a certain number of bilingual public servants, but that in all likelihood it would never become necessary for all federal employees to be fluent in the two official languages of Canada.

When I said that we need a number of bilingual civil servants, I was thinking in fact of views such as those expressed by the hon. member for Crowfoot in the amendment he put before the house today. In fact, the hon. member wants us to include in the legislation that no appointment nor promotion will ever be refused to a civil servant on the sole basis that he cannot express himself in both the languages of this country.

Mr. Speaker, how can one reasonably propose such a thing? And I would put this question to the hon. member for Crowfoot if he were still in the house, but he has the art