

*Official Languages*

organizations of this country, and only in them so far as this bill is concerned.

I said last fall in speaking on the resolution—and I think it is important enough for me to repeat—that as I watch Canada's independence being eroded by the economic domination of our industry and economy by the country to the south of us, eroded in the international sphere in which we so often fail to speak independently and so frequently act like mere satellites, and eroded by the so-called culture which comes at us over the air waves and through the screen, I know there is one official language and one official culture in this country which United States culture and United States programs cannot overwhelm and inundate. This culture and language will remain Canadian and no U.S. influence can affect and destroy them. The degree of our bilingualism is a measure of the enrichment of our country.

But there are still people, many of them, unfortunately, whose attitude toward bilingualism remains questioning, doubtful and fearful. I say to the government—and I am sure it realizes this as well as anyone else—that this attitude will not be changed by this bill or any other law. This will require time, patience and understanding. I say that it will not do to match intolerance and prejudice with impatience and rancour. Extremists on both sides feed on each other's intolerance and render difficult a rational, civilized and meaningful exchange aimed at reaching a greater and deeper understanding of what Canada is about. I sincerely hope that both in this parliament and throughout the country we will avoid this attitude on the subject in our debates here and in discussions across Canada.

● (2:20 p.m.)

*[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, it is really a pity to see how much the climate in favour of bilingualism has deteriorated recently. A year ago, the Canadian people believed in the necessity of bilingualism and seemed to approve the language policy suggested both by the Laurendeau-Dunton report and by the present bill.

Unfortunately, this eagerness, this sympathetic approach are no longer there. On the contrary, doubts and opposition are now growing in several parts of the country. The series of demonstrations staged against the English language in the schools of the province of Quebec have in no way helped to improve the situation.

Such events have rather done a disservice to the cause of bilingualism and, indeed, made things worse, not only in Quebec but also across the country, especially in the provinces where the French-speaking citizens are a minority.

The present situation in Canada makes it an increasingly heavy responsibility for the politicians, for the party leaders, for the members of parliament, for all the information media to educate the Canadian people and to make them aware of the fact that bi-lingualism is something essential to the unity of this country.

It falls on us, as Canadian citizens, to emphasize this necessity as an essential feature of the mutual understanding, equality and justice that should prevail in our country. In my view, it is our duty to try to solve the problem, to bring about understanding and sympathy instead of laying obstacles in the way leading to our objective by encouraging language prejudices and altering the truth in the necessary dialogues between our two language groups.

*[English]*

I ask myself, what are the reasons for the worsening of the climate on this issue? The last couple of years have been of great significance for our country. We faced a crisis of mistrust two or three years ago. Then the B and B report appeared and evoked a measure of understanding and an honest exchange of views. This was followed by the "Confederation for Tomorrow" conference of provincial premiers in Toronto. After some exchanges the leaders of the provincial governments seemed to gain an understanding of the problem of bilingualism and to exhibit a genuine sympathy toward the need to solve this problem in a just and equitable way.

Then came the federal-provincial conference on the constitution of February, 1968, under the chairmanship of the right hon. Lester B. Pearson. It showed further progress on this issue and we had reason to look hopefully to the future. But when the federal-provincial conference on the constitution resumed in February of this year, positions had again hardened and reflected a regrettable slide backwards on this basic and important Canadian problem.

What happened to change the atmosphere during the course of just one year? In my view, one of the reasons is obvious and important. The worsening climate was created by the fact that the official languages bill and the entrenchment of language and other basic