

Official Languages

Quite frankly, there are a number of us who think that this clause does not go far enough. Without taking the position that Professor Rudnicki took in his dissenting report, some of us feel there is room for an intermediate position, and this is expressed in the amendment that I have proposed and placed before the house.

Let me deal with the reasons for moving this particular amendment. First of all, while we are all Canadians, and Canadians first and always, there are different problems in different regions. As a matter of fact, there is no question that the reason for this legislation is precisely because of that fact. Western Canada does have a somewhat different history with regard to its exploration, development and economic progress. All throughout the latter part of the last century and into this century, immigrant boats from Europe came to this country and discharged their passengers in eastern Canada. These people travelled across northern Ontario and into the prairies. The people of the Ukraine, Poland and other parts of central Europe settled on the raw lands of the prairies, following a particular pattern from Manitoba into northern and some parts of central Saskatchewan, and northern and some parts of central Alberta. Thus a perceptible pattern of settlement and colonization was established. These people, settling on this raw land without the benefit of civilization, literally created by their bare hands a fine and viable community in parts of western Canada.

In saying that, I am in no sense diminishing the great contribution made by other people as well, but this is a situation that has developed and which appears obvious in western Canada. It is a fact of life which cannot be ignored in our contemplation of this question of language, racial groups and minority rights.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I wonder who has the floor?

Mr. Baldwin: Thank you, sir. I await the response that I am sure will be generated by those who are waiting to hear the rest of my remarks.

Today those people have woven a pattern in the economic, social and agricultural life of western Canada. In saying that, I am by no means derogating from what has happened, particularly since the second world war, in the great cities of Montreal and Toronto and other metropolitan areas in eastern Canada. Nevertheless, this particular situation to

which I have referred in western Canada has developed, and we cannot, indeed we must not be allowed, to ignore it.

Let me direct my attention for a moment to one of the linguistic groups, the people from the Ukraine. I have lived amongst these people. I was brought up, went to school and first practiced law in such a community. These people are a fiercely proud and independent people who have managed for a thousand years or more to maintain a viable identity, language and culture. Surely, anyone who saw the representatives of this particular ethnic group perform on Parliament Hill during the course of centennial celebrations will agree with me.

Scattered throughout western Canada are hundreds of halls dedicated to the preservation of the Ukrainian language, though not as an official language or to any extent suggesting that this language should be the language of commerce. These people have accepted English in western Canada as their working language. However, through struggle and perseverance, with this fierce national pride that they have, as I say, they have been able to maintain in a viable way their language, their art and their culture.

It has often been said—and this is something that is said every time representatives from the United States and Canada get together—that while people from the same nations in Europe have poured into Canada and the United States, we are unique, we are different. We, in Canada, have been determined to maintain our certain distinctive and diversified ethnic and cultural rights. This privilege was granted us under the British North America Act in a way known to all members of the house. Each time people from Canada and the United States meet we say: "We are the same as you in many respects, but we are different; we are unique. We think we have something to offer because we have the two great language groups in our country". We have a contribution to make in that regard. If that is the case then, surely, would our contribution not be enhanced if we were able to say to the world, "We have other minority groups in our country. Although they do not seek for their languages the status of official languages, nevertheless these groups have been able to maintain their languages and in that way make a constructive contribution to our society."