

*Official Languages*

not related in any way to the passing of this legislation.

If Mr. John Smallwood were to become Mr. Jean Petitbois, that will change absolutely nothing in the national situation of the country.

The French Canadian does not enjoy the traditional freedom of handing over his language and his culture without restraint. On the contrary, he must spend the best of his creative energy struggling constantly and consciously against huge difficulties to preserve that which is considered as quite natural in all normal societies, namely the free gift of language and culture.

History proves that his fight has not been too successful since his language and his culture are consistently declining and rapidly changing, or, if you prefer, degenerating. It takes someone who has taught for some thirteen years in the province of Quebec to accept those comments.

From the anthropological angle, culture can be seen as a gift of gods that is transmitted from one generation to another. It is the automatic transmission of creative efforts, of knowledge and ability resulting from experience and wisdom of previous generations to ensure the preservation of the group.

We cannot help being reminded of some old life or even survival patterns shaped through experience and tested over a long period of time. In short, the cultural structures contain the total historical conscience of a people. Culture is the sum total of preferences, propensities, aptitudes, specific objectives and aims of a people, its particular way of perceiving, feeling, thinking and reacting to objective facts.

I would like to stress how difficult and frustrating it is to have to consciously analyse the rules of a language while we speak it. If there are any of those unfortunate in this house, and some are very unhappy about such a situation, such is the plight of most French Canadians, specially those who are bilingual. They have become experts in the difficult and frustrating exercise of consciously speaking their own language. Normal people, like the English Canadians, the French or even the Eskimos, do not have to worry about their language, they just speak it. Abnormal people, like the French Canadians, have to stop and think before they speak because the words they use automatically are misunderstood by society; they have to watch themselves and consciously change them quite often.

[Mr. Matte.]

• (4:00 p.m.)

The question of linguistic changes due to contact with other languages—another important source of external compulsions—can become really disastrous for the weaker language involved. In this case, French is the weaker language, not because its internal structure is deficient, but because the social dynamics prevailing throughout the country and even in Quebec is clearly to the advantage of the English language. It is clear to linguists, even if most people are unaware of it, that the French spoken in Canada, including in Quebec, its stronghold, is undergoing fast alterations as a result of pressures exercised by the Anglo-American culture and language.

Within the fortress of Quebec itself, one finds in Montreal the Anglo-Quebecker Trojan horse.

That is why thousands of French Canadians have been assimilated by the English throughout Canada, including the 50,000 on the island of Montreal. They can no longer pride themselves on being promoters of the French language and culture in Canada, even if they continue to eat pea soup.

What does the term "to feel at home" mean if not that the individual feels at ease within the linguistic-cultural framework which he knows and unconsciously understands, because he has been raised and educated within it and he adjusts perfectly to it, because they are made for him.

The linguistic-cultural environment is another one which feeds and develops human personality.

Language is the most important vehicle for the expression of culture and human personality.

It is the first means which permits to perceive the knowledge and the organization of the exterior and interior reality of the speaker.

Structuration of human personality, through formative agents of culture and language, is mainly a painless and unconscious process, and human behaviour as it is conveyed by language and culture, constitutes a range of unconscious mechanisms.

The linguistic-cultural environment prepares the individual to integrate himself easily and comfortably within his own structures so that he may live, work, think, feel, perceive, progress and act, in short, survive with the maximum of efficiency within structures where he feels at ease.