

Supply

That is why it is vitally important that we sit down and develop a brand new act so that after the next election a majority government of Reformers will be running the country and no Bloc Quebecois.

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments.

He will agree that when we have these debates we must be very careful that what we say is founded in truth and reasoned analysis and not in rhetoric.

He said several times in his remarks that the presence of the Bloc is due to Canada's official languages policy. I submit to him that the presence of the Bloc is actually due, as is the presence of the Reform Party, to the failure of the previous Conservative government to retain the confidence of the people. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the Official Languages Act.

I would further say that he and a previous speaker have made several references to language as a cause of dissension and some unfortunate incidents in the past. A specific reference was made for example to the Acadian expulsion.

I submit that the expulsion of the Acadians had nothing to do with language. It was a case in the 18th century of what is today known as ethnic cleansing. The Acadians were removed not because they spoke French but because they were of a different religion and because they were an economic and a military liability in Nova Scotia at that time.

I would further say that if he looks back in the past at the type of impartiality that the Reform Party prides itself in he will discover that the history of English people has shown a tremendous tolerance for French. Throughout the middle ages and throughout the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and even the 19th century most of the upper classes, shall we say, and the well educated people in England and the British possessions spoke French regularly. Indeed, this tolerance for the other language existed into the 19th century. He is blaming language for something for which language is not responsible. Language is basically a form of communication. The better we understand one another's language the better we can understand one another and the better we can overcome the type of tribalism that may be characteristic of the type of principles that the Bloc stands for. The Bloc represents the same type of people that I belong to, other Canadians.

● (1345)

The language enables us to reach out to one another. I think we Canadians have to do everything in our power to make sure that as many Canadians have the opportunity to speak both languages as we possibly can.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, in some ways I think the hon. member should have been over on this side writing Reform speeches because we agree with some parts of what he says.

There is no question in my mind that the language policy of Canada today has in some way created the fact that we have 54 people sitting there today.

In 1968, as I said, there were divisions in this country. There was a desire to achieve linguistic justice in this country. Mr. Trudeau, the Prime Minister at that time, addressed it by introducing a languages act. He went against the recommendations of the commission that said "territorial bilingualism" and introduced the concept of "personal bilingualism". If Mr. Trudeau thought he had separatism in 1968, he had no idea what separatism would mean in 1994 in this very House.

The hon. member also talked about how the English language tolerates French and other languages from around the world. I think that is true. We as Reformers and as English speaking Canadians are bending over backward to try and do what we can to ensure that this country is good for everybody, coast to coast. We only ask that we get the same kind of recognition as Canadians from the people in Quebec who feel that because they have been slighted in some small way that they should pack their bags and leave, which will be the destruction of their own economy and perhaps the destruction of the Canadian economy as well.

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that the Bloc does not want to make this experiment called Canada work. I wonder in light of some of the comments of the Reform member using such terms as "dominance of English in this country" and "Quebec with only a shore along the St. Lawrence" whether that is an attempt to hasten the separation of Quebec from Canada rather than trying to heal any wounds and whether that is the goal of the Reform Party, to hasten Quebec leaving this country rather than trying to live in a country that compromises and has two official languages.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. Seventy-five per cent of Canadians are English speaking and 25 per cent of Canadians are French speaking. In our neighbouring country to the south there are 250 million people who speak English. If the province of Quebec goes alone and forms a separate country it is going to be a French speaking island in the sea of English speaking North America. It is going to be lost in a big sea with no friends. No anglophone group will be there to help it. If its language and economy are to be preserved, it would be far better off in a larger group such as Canada than by itself. If it sets out on its own and feels it is going to preserve French with no friends whatsoever, it is going to be totally dominated by the cultural impact of the rest of North America.