

Official Languages

government, "We know that you have become transfixed, and that all now is well. You are forgiven."

I opposed the bill. I oppose this resolution on the ground that it will give explicit approval and an expression of confidence to the Prime Minister for doing that which he has not done. Never before has a government ever asked to receive a vote of confidence for what it hasn't done because it has decided since an election to change its mind. I ask hon. members behind me, are you going to be made dupes? I can look at one of you, act one and another who were elected just because of the Languages Act, at least according to the Minister of Transport, and according to two or three other ministers.

This resolution shows a contempt for parliament, for parliament is only consulted when given an opportunity to afford a mechanism for political expediency to the Prime Minister. And he hopes for support of the public. It is not a very subtle plan. The ruse is far too transparent. I, for one, have not that confidence in this government that I will give it support for what it has not done. I shall not support such political trickery.

The purpose is to accomplish the unique feat of conveying to French Canada the idea that absolute bilingualism will prevail. That will be the interpretation. When the Conservative party supports this, French Canada may simply say, "Why should we support that party? Just because it agreed with the action taken by the government?"

On the one hand, government ministers are trying to fool French Canadians, and on the other hand they are pretending to the rest of Canada that they have changed their attitude. I have tried, Sir, with the appreciation that I have for this House, to remove the verbal veneer with which the Prime Minister has endeavoured to clothe this act of expediency. When this Opposition votes for the resolution, every last one of you, according to the Minister of Transport, according to the Minister of Communications, and according to the Postmaster General, will have voted for the Act. None of you will be able to go to your constituencies and meet that. That will be the Liberal argument in every part of this country.

The Conservative party tried to improve the Official Languages Act. They were spurned. I am not going to ask hon. members to read the Official Languages Act but I venture an opinion, even without benefit of a Gallup Poll, that it has not been read by very many. It has never been my custom—and at my age I live from day to day—to tailor my principles to political expediency. I do not intend to cower before false gods. This is a transparent trick.

Sir, I spent a lifetime trying to bring about equality for all Canadians of all racial origins. Now, this will be swept aside. Because I was of mixed origin I felt for others who were too. My people had been in Canada since the early 1800's, but because of my name I was not a Canadian. I was not accepted as a Canadian. I put an end to that. I said we were Canadians all.

And what have we got today? We have Anglophones, Francophones, multiculturalphones, all kinds. Everything I have striven for I see now being swept aside, and an end to that Canadianism which, above everything else, has been my devotion throughout a long life. It could be the

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

last time I will speak on this subject when this debate is over, but my last words will be: God help Canada from the disunity in which it now finds itself.

We shall never build the nation which our potential resources make possible by dividing ourselves into Anglophones, Francophones, multiculturalphones, or whatever kind of phoneys you choose. I say: Canadians, first, last, and always!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Verdun): Mr. Speaker, I say God help Canada were the attitude of the right hon. gentleman to prevail in this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, I have been a great admirer of the right hon. gentleman. I think this is an open secret in the House of Commons. I still am. I think that the right hon. gentleman has earned his place in the history books of this country by his contribution to parliament, by his production of the Bill of Rights, by his undeniable concern for the rights of individuals. Parliament would be a poorer place without the right hon. gentleman. His ability as a debater is second to none and his ability to talk around the subject at hand is second to none. Very rarely this afternoon did the right hon. gentleman speak about the issue at hand. His concept of equality is something that is hard for me to follow. Equality for Canadians, obviously in the opinion of the right hon. gentleman, means a unilingual English-speaking Canadian, a Canada in which Ottawa and the public service is out of bounds to millions of Canadians who happen to live in one particular section of the country called the province of Quebec.

● (1640)

The hon. gentleman has done many things to advance the cause of French speaking Canadians. He did, indeed, name the first French speaking Governor General in Canadian history, following the first English speaking Canadian Governor General in Canadian history which I think was obviously a very logical thing to do. But when we get down to an issue as sensitive as language, when we get down to the question of unity, I try very hard to follow the logic of the right hon. gentleman. For many years I have attempted to be in the House on each and every occasion when he debates because I have learned a great deal from his style and his ability to make speeches without reading a text, something which should be enforced in this House. Nevertheless, I was puzzled and found it difficult to understand how his concept of Canadianism could possibly be acceptable to the people who are resident of the province of Quebec, who are Canadian, whose mother tongue happens to be French and who are told "There is room for you in Ottawa but under the following condition—that you learn to speak English because that is the language of the majority in this country."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: The hon. gentleman, subtly and astutely, dragged in the two nations concept, the associate state concept, the third force, people of other cultures and things that had nothing at all to do with the issue at hand,