

*Official Languages*

ever since the B.N.A. Act was passed but to the other people, the original inhabitants and the other races who have come to this country and have done so much, particularly in western Canada, to bring about the tremendous improvement and development which we now see in this land. There should be more than a symbolic gesture such as is contained in this bill. It would have done a great deal to alleviate the anger, hostility and discomfort which has been aroused in the minds of many people of other than French or English descent, particularly in western Canada.

Before redistribution, of some 90,000 people in my constituency 18,000 to 20,000 came from Quebec more than 60 years ago, possibly 25,000 are people of mixed descent from Europe, 8,000 to 10,000 are of Indian and Metis background and the rest are of mixed nationalities. These people have grown up together and shared the common experience of finding, developing and opening up a new land. The people from the province of Quebec and those who have joined them have no difficulty in accepting the fact they are in an English speaking milieu. They have accepted the English language as the one used in the province, but they have also retained their original language, art and culture. It is because of this fact that in a new land, a pioneer country, we have shared this experience, have learned to understand each other, and have grown up together. French people speak French and the rest speak English. There has been a peaceful accommodation.

● (3:50 p.m.)

In my opinion the government has lamentably failed to take the situation in western Canada into account, an area where, to be realistic about it, there is a great measure of misunderstanding and some failure to respond to the proposals in this bill. In this respect the government must bear a tremendous burden.

However, having said all this there can be no doubt as to how I must vote now that the bill has been introduced and set upon the assembly line of the legislative mill. In my opinion it would create a greater measure of disunity, of lack of harmony, and would do far more to prejudice the prospects of this land becoming a country where for the first time there is an opportunity for people to live together in peace and understanding, irrespective of their different cultures, languages and races, if the bill were defeated.

Apart from some of the countries of Asia, the French, English and Slavic languages are spoken in tremendous areas of the world. Having in mind that here in Canada French and English are official languages, and that the Slavic language is retained and practised in many parts of the country, we have a tremendous opportunity to play a part in what I would like to think could be the ultimate bringing together of many parts of the world.

During the course of the last two weeks it was my good fortune to be present at the meetings in Strasbourg of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, comprised of 18 nations including most of the Common Market nations, some of the nations of EFTA, and some nations outside the ambit of those two bodies. As I say, it is a consultative assembly. They make no decisions. But it was interesting to us when we got there to find that the official languages of the consultative assembly were French and English. This permitted the delegation from Canada to fit into the pattern of the meetings and to participate effectively and well. I hope that the federal government will take its responsibilities and do something more than it has done, and more than is proposed by the B and B Commission, not only to preserve the rights but to enhance the culture and linguistic prospects of the third ethnic group in Canada.

I end on this note, Mr. Speaker, that if we in Canada cannot learn to live together in friendship, peace and understanding, what hope is there for the rest of the world? For this reason, despite the misgivings which some hon. members may have, I urge them to have regard to the over-all advantages and to the greater benefits which will arise from the continued unity of this country, to swallow their genuine reluctance, as I have mine, and vote for this measure.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Matte (Champlain):** Mr. Speaker, as I have no objection of any kind against this official languages bill, I approve it unreservedly, even if—in spite of the ambition of this legislation for the future—it cannot affect in any way the true problem of national unity.

I have no objection at all against the enactment of this official languages bill. The problem we are facing will have to be solved by the provinces themselves.

Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak in this debate, I want to deal with the real problem we are facing and which, as I said at first, is