

Mr. Chairman,

I am most grateful and honoured to be included with the distinguished speakers who are taking part in this seminar on the Languages of Canadian Diplomacy. It gives me pleasure to note also that the pace of this seminar is not so hectic as that of other seminars in which I have taken part, in which a polite but none the less captive audience endured as many as eight or nine lectures in a single day, a point which I hope they may be taking up with those responsible for Collective Bargaining and Grievance Procedures. As for myself, I welcome this occasion. For quite a few years of my life I made a modest living by lifting my voice in university lecture rooms on the limited range of matters with which, at that time, I was familiar, or so I thought. Now, for more than twenty years, I have had a somewhat better living on condition that I say nothing whatsoever in public. Imagine then with what alacrity I leaped at the unwary proposal of Mr. Fortier that I return briefly this morning to the world of the articulate, and I, at least, Mr. Chairman, am looking forward to my observations this morning with the liveliest pleasure.

The formal title of my remarks is somewhat grandiose. First of all, I do not propose to deal with formal diplomatic correspondence, that is to say, with such things as first and third person notes on aide memoire. These matters are dealt with in the Manual of Procedures; and in Chapter IV, Annex C of the Manual of Post Administration, there is a section entitled *Le Protocole Epistolaire*. A little later on in your careers when you have occasion to write to His Holiness the Pope or to the President of France, you will find there the correct salutations and complimentary closes. I hope you will forgive me, Mr. Chairman, for introducing this modest plug for the Manuals on which, as you know, I spent about two years as writer and editor, and as blackmailer of the departmental divisions. What I propose to do is to point out a number of what seem to me defects in the habitual English prose of the department, and later on to suggest some modest proposals for remedial measures. This bi-lateral approach reminds me of a very distinguished English novelist invited to address the Faculty and Scholars of the Sorbonne when I was working there many years ago. His French was reasonably adequate but, alas, like so many of us, with his very first sentence he fell into what the French call so aptly "les pièges", or "les faux amis". He had been invited to speak on the various stages of his literary career and on the principle influences, so far as he was prepared to admit them, on the content and style of his distinguished novels. His opening words were as follows: "Quand je regarde dans mon derrière, je constate qu'il est divisé en deux morceaux presque entièrement égaux". Other examples of reliance on frail reeds will be familiar to you, such as the masterful translation of "Voici l'anglais de nouveau avec son sang-froid habituel" as "Here's the Englishman again with his usual bloody cold", or again the charming translation by a young English girl of "she married beneath her station", as "Elle a marié au-dessous de sa gare". At the railway station at Newhaven