

Government Orders

our country's two official languages was hard to accept in some parts of our country. We needed great patience and determination to reach our goals". Then he went on to make this important point: "But we did it, thanks to Canadians' tolerance, generosity and goodwill".

We are today asking Canadians to regenerate that same spirit of tolerance, generosity and goodwill in the face of the challenges now before us. We are asking Canadians to put aside narrow concerns and reject the temptation for the kinds of answers that seek to divide. We are asking all members of this House to take an active role in achieving that renewed consensus because, as my predecessor went on to say in that same speech, "We must also, all of us, do our best to rekindle the bonds between our two linguistic communities to encourage and revive the spirit of harmony and tolerance which is lacking today".

I think that today, when we are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Canadian flag, we can find some parallels in the current friction over language. I am one of only three current members who were in the House during that period. I participated in the debate over the flag and that debate was marked with division and acrimony.

Earlier today, I took part in a celebration of that anniversary which was organized by a government, formed by the party, many of whose members at the time, led the opposition to our new flag. Yet today, all parties in this House and indeed all Canadians look upon the flag with pride.

Many people thought, at that time given the bitterness of the flag debate, that this could never happen. But, Mr. Speaker, it did happen. It happened because people came together, built understanding and consensus. I sincerely hope that we can, as parliamentarians and as a country, do the same over the matter of bilingualism. Surely this is something we must do.

I believe, as my predecessor said only last week: "Canada's potential fragility is language, but Canada's potential strength is language".

I urge all members to support this motion. Let us make today the day we begin to build on that strength and turn the tide toward a more tolerant, more compas-

sionate and above all, a stronger and more united Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I recognize the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Coquitlam—Unemployment Insurance; the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Small Business; and the hon. member for York Centre—Justice.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, before I begin the formal part of my remarks, I want to inform the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in the House that my leader would have liked to have spoken today but she has other commitments. I think the government was aware of that a few days ago, but I want to make it very clear.

In the beginning, I want to say that we support the resolution before the House today. I do so personally, and my party does so with a great deal of pride. We hope that the resolution before the House today will help unify this country and bring Canadians together.

I also rise as a western Canadian who has never hesitated to speak out in favour of bilingualism in this country and the equality of our two languages no matter where I go, not only in my constituency, but indeed anywhere across the west, or anywhere across Canada.

The debate today is a debate about linguistic minority rights. It is a debate about justice and about fairness. It is a debate about the future of our country.

I think that our party throughout its history, going back to the CCF and then the NDP, has had a very proud history of fighting for linguistic equality in this country.

[*Translation*]

I know the Prime Minister is a friend of Robert Cliche, who was the leader of our party in Quebec. Mr. Cliche worked very hard for the equality of our two official languages in this country, and I am very proud of his contribution, not only to our party but to the entire country, and I know the Prime Minister will agree.