

ment's official languages policy, to other major legislation proposed in the throne speech.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, in one way or another, every government since Confederation has sought to enhance national unity in Canada: to remove the irritants which divide us, while strengthening the many links which join us. Like many of its predecessors, this government understands that national unity is not to be found in an immutable formula chiselled in stone. The quest for Canadian unity is not frozen for all time in any one track or single direction. The pace of modern change is too rapid for that; our country is too large and diverse for that.

In Canada we have two official languages; a number of proud provinces and regions; many thriving cultures. All of us rejoice in our diverse identities, and are vigorously determined to retain them. Hence, achieving national unity will depend on meeting different priorities in different areas. Our challenge is that it now depends on meeting many of them at the same time.

The throne speech has proposed measures to improve urban life, and to widen opportunities for western Canadians; to deal with many economic and regional expansion problems; and with what some call "the language problem". They are all on our agenda for this session; we will deal with them all with equal vigour. For as we well know, if the essential needs of any major group or region are consistently ignored, in the long run there may not be a Canada for any of us.

● (1630)

Mr. Speaker, in relation to national unity, today's resolution has an extra dimension because it concerns the Public Service of Canada. Our public service develops and applies the whole range of federal policies affecting the lives of all Canadians. This puts it in constant touch with the people, in intimate contact with their everyday concerns. The public service must be acutely sensitive to the needs of Canadians, so Canadians will feel it is their public service; and so the public servant will feel himself involved with the whole.

The policy of the government is to attract the most capable and competent people to our public service. We cannot do this, and the Public service cannot adequately serve all Canadians, unless it is increasingly representative of the two language groups.

Why do we have two official languages in Canada? In my opinion, not primarily because of any historical founding rights, though they are important to many people. Not, certainly, because those two particular languages are superior to any other. We are not dealing with historical abstractions or cultural preferences. We are dealing with straightforward political and social realities.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: And a stark reality of our country is this: there are about 16 million English-speaking Canadians, most of whom speak no French. There are about 6 million French-speaking Canadians, a majority of whom speak no English. If only because of sheer force of numbers, either group has the power to destroy the unity of this country.

Official Languages

Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker: two numerically dominant language groups, both of them prevalently unilingual. As the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) reminded us last December:

These facts leave Canada with only one choice, only one realistic policy: to guarantee the language rights of both linguistic communities. They are the facts which have dictated the government's bilingualism policies, and the principles which must apply in their application in the public service.

Mr. Speaker, this concern with the two official languages is a very old one here in parliament. My right hon. friend from Prince Albert has cited this himself. So perhaps he will remember how vigorously John A. Macdonald denounced any attempt—in Macdonald's words—"to oppress the one language or to render it inferior to the other." "I believe", said Macdonald, "that would be impossible if it were tried—and it would be foolish and wicked if it were possible". Impossible, of course, because neither the French nor the English-speaking Canadian is going to throw himself, or his language, into the sea. Foolish and wicked, because to make one language inferior to the other, even by default, would implant a core of implacable dissatisfaction at the heart of our country.

You know, many of us take language pretty much for granted, much like breathing. But that is exactly why limiting a person's use of his language can cause in him such a trauma, because you are interfering with something almost as basic as breathing. The Pearson government accurately stated a number of years ago that:

... language is at once the extension of the individual personality, and an indispensable tool of social organization: fail to recognize the linguistic rights of either French or English-speaking Canadians, and their will to preserve Canada will be seriously weakened, if not destroyed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, for more than a century now many French-speaking Canadians have been saying, "That government in Ottawa, that's not my government... Why, it doesn't even speak my language". That is the kind of frustration that fed separatism. So the federal government finally said to the people of Quebec, "Look, keep faith in Canada. Things can be changed. We'll implement the B and B report, and bring in the Official Languages Act. We'll get the public service people to look over their recruitment and personnel policies".

"We'll get Ottawa and Hull, with Queen's Park and the people in Quebec City a bit enthusiastic about making the capital more bilingual, a more open city, a more national capital. Because Quebecers have to feel at home in all of Canada; and certainly in our federal government."

Now, so far the people of Quebec have kept the faith. They rejected separatism when it was raised as an issue in the elections of 1968, 1970 and 1972. But the federal government must keep the faith too. All of us, working together, have got to show once and for all Ottawa can speak in the French language and can reflect the values of French as well as English-speaking Canada. This we must do, because we want to stay together as one Canada. Thanks to all parties in this House, we have our basic tool, the Official Languages Act. But we always have to ensure we are using it in the very best way we can. And that is part of what today's resolution is all about.