

*The Constitution*

Quebec? Is it destruction of partnership to permit any French Canadian to continue his education anywhere in this country? I ask hon. members to think about that.

*[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, Canadians are bewildered during this debate by certain allegiances, nay, by some alliances. They wonder why there was a union to fight separation in 1980, and why there is now this allegiance to and this union with the very person who wanted to break up the country once and for all?

On May 20, 1980, Quebec wanted a change. The status quo had to be broken after 54 years, and in the meantime, the Quebec people gave a mandate to the Parti Québécois on April 13, 1981, to continue to govern and to build Quebec and not to destroy Canada by separating. I hope that Mr. Lévesque will keep his word: no referendum or elections before three or four years. Quebec has shown confidence in him and we have to respect this decision. However, I urge him not to betray this confidence and to work in the interest of Quebecers toward the welfare of the Canadian people as a whole.

All Canadians, and all the Premiers of the nine other provinces promised in 1980 that there would be some changes. What are the changes suggested by this government? To patriate our Constitution, to entrench in it the basic freedoms of Canadians, to provide a constitutional amendment formula if the provinces cannot agree within three years, and to enshrine the principle of equalization of wealth by the federal government from the affluent to the less prosperous provinces.

Mr. Speaker, Canadian history is characterized by the concept of sharing and of helping the various regions which, for whatever reason, do not have an equal share of the natural resources of our country. The members of this government believe that it is the responsibility of the Canadian government to see to it that no region of Canada be forgotten in the sharing of the wealth or the advantages brought about by these resources. Sharing is part of our history and it is this spirit of sharing which will ensure the future of our country, sharing of our poverty, of our troubles, sharing of our dark moments but also of our joy and our wealth.

In 1867, Mr. Speaker, French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians entered into an alliance which granted certain rights to the provinces thus created. In Quebec, for many years, for almost a century, the main language used in business and in industry was English. I learned English as a youngster because we had Slovak neighbours who had just come to this country.

● (2010)

*[English]*

And these young fellows, Simurda, Kolesar, Milchak and Kopil, could not speak French at that time. Their fathers worked at the CIP mill in Gatineau, Quebec. In the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s the working language at the CIP mill, which is just one mile from the capital city, was English. Why did I

learn English? Because I wanted to communicate with these fellows. Today one is a prominent surgeon, one became a colonel in the Canadian army, and the rest are working at the CIP mill. They also wanted to communicate with their francophone friends and today these people are trilingual. They can speak French, English and Slovak, and I do not think they are any poorer because of that.

As I grew up, I continued to learn the English language and I worked at the CIP mill during the summer months. Although 85 per cent of the workers were francophone, the working language was English, the majority of the bosses were English and the majority of the orders were given in English. That was the way of life. We accepted that, and I do not think we had any choice at that time.

However, the frustrations became more apparent in the 1950s and these frustrations resulted in a PQ member being elected in our riding in 1976. Today the working language is French. Yet 90 per cent of those people working at the CIP mill are bilingual, and incidentally, 90 per cent of the anglophones working at the CIP mill are also bilingual.

The coats of arms with the inscription "A mari usque ad mare" became official on November 21, 1921. On our coat of arms there are two flags, the Union Jack and the fleur de lys of France originating in the reign of Louis XIV, which recognized the two origins and the two founding cultures. What I heard from the hon. member for Simcoe South (Mr. Stewart) disturbed me greatly. I never thought it was possible to hear these things in the House. If the hon. member and some of his colleagues do not want to learn French, that is their business. In fact, I respect their decision.

I have a story to put on the record. Once I was fortunate to visit the Canary Islands. One night I was served by a Spanish waiter with whom my wife practised her Spanish. I learned that this young waiter could speak English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Hon. members might ask why he could speak five languages. He told me he wanted to communicate with the tourists and that he wanted to make enough money to be able to come to Canada to live and become a Canadian citizen. He is not alone. How many immigrants come to Canada today knowing two, three, and sometimes four, languages?

*[Translation]*

Some people feel that bilingualism is forced upon them. I had an argument with the hon. member for Edmonton East (Mr. Lambert) during a committee meeting and told him that that was not the way we saw it in Quebec; for us, bilingualism means understanding, communication, equality within the country, and also acceptance. It is an acceptance of the fact that there are some French-speaking citizens of this country who want to be Canadians, neither French nor English, but 100 per cent Canadians.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is one French-speaking member of this House who would refuse to speak to an English-speaking member just because he or she does not speak French. It is rather the opposite that occurs. Those who