

Official Languages

Today, the head of a family who is 50 years old and who has five or six children at home wants his children to learn both languages and to become bilingual.

As for myself, I have two sons, who are 30 and 29 years old. When they were 3, 4 and 5, my neighbor in Rouyn was a Ukrainian who had a boy the same age as mine. After three or four weeks, my two boys would come back for dinner and speak to each other but I could not understand a word. My two boys spoke Ukrainian to each other, simply because they had been playing in our backyard with a young Ukrainian boy.

Children can learn anything. We who have raised children know that for a fact. It is even said that they learn much too fast in some areas. As for languages, it would be easy to teach French in every school, in the very first grades, and after a few years, Canadian children all over the country would be bilingual.

Today, there are clashes. Why? Because in the past, some people did not take their responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, when I was in Victoria last year, I wanted to send a telegram to a person who does not speak English. I wanted to dictate the message in French, in Victoria, but it was impossible. Nobody understood a word of French, at the Canadian National. Then, I had to spell each and every word, and when the telegram arrived, the letters were all mixed up. In fact, it was incomprehensible.

• (3:00 p.m.)

In my opinion, this is not logical.

If, for instance, an English-speaking gentleman comes to Rouyn and wants to send a telegram in his own language to somebody in Victoria, is he not happy to be attended to in English? That is understandable, and that is what the bill is designed to establish, not for the sake of bilingualism, but to recognize the two official languages in the federal departments.

Mr. Speaker, once again that does not mean that everybody must learn French. The solution I have to put forward relates to education. If everywhere, in Quebec as well as in other provinces, both languages are taught since the beginning of schooling, the trick will be done in a few years hence and parents will be happy to have bilingual children.

In the last few years, exchanges of students between eastern and western Canada have been very few. Such exchanges, we have

found, have been very beneficial to the students involved and have resulted in better understanding between different regions of the country.

Last Wednesday night, I spoke before the members of the Pro-Canada Association in Montreal, whose founder or president is the mayor of Pointe-Claire, Mr. Séguin, who is also a member of the Quebec National Assembly. At that meeting, I met Germans, German-speaking Canadians, Ukrainians and French-Canadians. The object of the Pro-Canada Association is to promote Canadian unity. There was a choir from Trois-Rivières, the *Sing-Out* composed of 80 young boys and girls, aged 10, 12, 13 and 14, who sang in French and in English with an enthusiasm and a warmth which are rarely seen.

I had a vision, Mr. Speaker, I thought I could see the Canada of to-morrow. These young smiling people were acting with precision, quite spontaneously. They were tremendous.

That is why I asked the hon. Secretary of State if it would be possible to subsidize such groups, in order to encourage such an attitude throughout Canada.

At that time, my question was ruled out of order. I welcome the opportunity, as we are considering the official languages bill, to point out how much good such a singing choir could do for national unity throughout this country.

Mind you, they are young French-Canadian boys and girls from the city of Trois-Rivières, who sing in English, and who were applauded by English-speaking and French-speaking people, because they sing Canada. They do not sing of division, of separation or even of destruction, but of Canadian unity. It is with such choirs that we can really establish or strengthen the ties which must bind all Canadians together, without exception.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, I asked the Secretary of State whether it is possible to grant subsidies to such groups. In the province of Quebec, thousands of dollars are appropriated for cultural exchanges with France, or Italy or every European country.

However, I should like to ask a few cents for similar small organizations which I feel are most important. Governments declare themselves unable to help those young people to travel across Canada to promote better understanding among Canadians. It is a shame to go and seek culture elsewhere when