

Unity in Diversity

* But Canada also needs the means to keep her own national identity and to act for Canada, on the domestic level as well in the international field, especially in the effort to safeguard peace and security in the world. In order to give a new impetus to our economy as well as to continue our role in the world, we need a united Canada. Unity in diversity, unity of action as partners, equal partners. It is within such a healthy Canada that Quebec will be in a position to realize her aspirations.

Mr. Chairman, the Government that I am leading will do its best to establish such a status of equality between the two partners and to assure a better understanding, an easier and more continuous exchange of views and opinions between them.

To this end, I place great hope in the Royal Commission on Biculturalism which we have just created, which will clarify problems, recommend solutions and help government take the necessary action.

Steps Already Taken

We have already taken steps to have the French language not only recognized officially in the Government of Canada, but also - and this is important - to give it a more and more current use. It is our desire that, in all sectors of the Federal administration, French can be used as well as English. I know we will achieve this anticipated result and a bilingual Civil Service.

An increasing number of English-speaking Canadians are realizing that learning the French language is not a regrettable concession to our national circumstances, but an enriching cultural experience.

There is no more important problem facing this country - apart from peace and work for the people - than the maintenance and development of the Canadian Confederation, on the foundation of equal partnership, the only foundation that makes possible the Canadian nation. Such a nation, strong and united, is essential if we are not to be absorbed in some continental society, and thereby lose our own separate traditions and cultures, French and British.

I have already spoken about the problem of preserving this Canadian nation, of maintaining our Canadian identity, against the inevitable pressures from the U.S.A., all the stronger because they are friendly and, in many ways, have had good results for us.

Some Canadians, however, are beginning to ask themselves: "Why should we worry about 'saving' Canada from the American 'invasion' if we don't believe in a Canada to be saved, a Canada which is greater than its parts?"