

*Official Languages*

language. By creating a climate in which French culture can flourish, surely the principle of national diversity is ensured. As I have already pointed out, whenever we dismiss the French fact we must dismiss all the other "facts" too—the Ukrainian fact, the Polish fact, the German fact, the Indian and Eskimo fact, indeed, every fact that makes our western region so culturally interesting and rich. By acknowledging the justice of the French fact, however, we infer that there is a need for a means by which the "third force" Canadians, of whom there are so many in the west, can preserve their languages and cultures wherever they are gathered in sufficient numbers so to do. Thus, wholeheartedly and with consistency, we can commend the sort of resolution adopted by the ninth Ukrainian Canadian Congress in Winnipeg on October 14, 1968. I will read that resolution:

Now therefore be it resolved:

That pursuant to its exclusive constitutional right under section 93 of the British North America Act to legislate in the field of education, the province of Manitoba be petitioned by the Ukrainian Canadian Committee to enact legislation to protect the language and cultural rights of all persons in Manitoba of other than English or French descent by guaranteeing to all such persons, in the districts populated by the respective minorities in such of the public schools therein... the right to receive instruction in their respective language as a subject of study and the right to have their language used in such public schools from grade 1—

In my opinion this was a sensible suggestion for the Ukrainians of Manitoba to bring forward. It would be entirely inconsistent and untenable for them to bring forward this resolution if there were not a measure such as Bill C-120. The two things go together and are in my opinion inseparable. The country as a whole has two official languages, and a region or province is justified in encouraging regional languages.

• (12:20 p.m.)

I am convinced that the so-called western backlash has nothing to do with the official languages bill. Those politicians from either side of the house and those public figures who pretend that it has, do themselves and their country a disservice. We need constitutional reform—yes—so that in some way we may have a more effective voice in the west than the one we enjoy at the moment. We want a greater voice in the decision-making bodies of this nation—in parliament, in the Senate, in the boardrooms of our financial and industrial concerns, and on the executives of the labour unions whose decisions affect so many of us today. We are a "becoming" nation, which is

[Mr. Osler.]

both our glory and our cross. As westerners we want more opportunities to help decide what we become.

These are the things that worry us western Canadians, and they have nothing to do with Bill C-120 which, with amendments, is a completely innocuous and a very necessary piece of legislation. What we politicians of all parties from the west should do, after resisting any temptation to place ourselves at the head of a not so holy and utterly sterile crusade against this legislation, is to press with all our might for economic and constitutional reform that will let the west take its rightful place as an equal partner in this great Canada of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I endorse wholeheartedly the principle of this bill.

**Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Chester North):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of a more inappropriate time for the parliament of Canada to be discussing the bill before us. Many serious problems face the people of Canada, and most of them have a great deal to do with whether or not we will remain a nation in the years ahead. None of these problems will be solved as a result of either the passage or the debate of this bill.

I represent a constituency in the Atlantic provinces. Regional economic disparity is a fact recognized by the government and by the people of this nation. The most recent unemployment figure from that area indicates that the problem continues to be serious and even chaotic. Yet the government does nothing or next to nothing except to send a new minister down to the region to talk about programs and plans that he envisages will take 15 years before having any material effect on the income and status of the people of that region. In spite of this the government says that we must debate this bill even though by its very nature and content it is questionable whether this institution should even consider it.

The government tells this institution and the people of this nation that it has the competence to produce and enact this piece of legislation even though leading jurists of this nation have expressed grave doubts as to the competence of parliament to deal with the legislation before us. While the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) indicates that he and his law officers are of the opinion that the bill is constitutional, an individual of no less stature than the former president of the Exchequer Court of Canada has indicated in no uncertain terms that it is his belief that parliament does