

National Unity

rights of its linguistic minorities the most be the first one to bear federal disavowal.

It would be just as unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, if the federal government undertook to challenge the constitutionality of that legislation before the courts. Political wisdom prompts us to let the Quebec people rate by themselves the actions of their own government at the next provincial elections. In addition, it is a fine opportunity to show Quebecers that the federal system does not stand in the way of their government as far as the promotion of the French language and culture in Quebec is concerned and consequently, independence is really not necessary. Anyway, how could the federal government justify fighting to the death a legislation which gives the English-speaking minority in Quebec a treatment which would delight French-speaking minorities outside Quebec, if it were given to them?

Mr. Speaker, at a time when in some quarters people are groundlessly panic-stricken at the prospects of the English-speaking community in Quebec, in the years ahead I feel we should turn our attention to the conditions French-speaking minorities have to put up with outside Quebec. In six out of nine English-speaking provinces, the percentage of people of French origin whose mother tongue is now English is over 45 per cent. The assimilation rate has even reached 65 per cent in British Columbia and 80 per cent in Newfoundland. Indeed, only New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba have French-speaking minorities whose future is not ineluctably doomed, more especially in New Brunswick and in Ontario which are contiguous to Quebec. However, they will resist assimilation only if their provincial governments, following the example of the Quebec government, is sympathetic to their cause and provides them with a complete educational system in which instruction will be given in French.

● (1850)

In that respect, I cannot understand the attitude of the premier of Ontario who keeps repeating that he wants to reinforce Canadian unity, yet he remains the perfect usage of stinginess when it comes to accommodating the Franco-Ontarian community about the language issues. I wish he would realize soon that he would contribute remarkably to Canadian unity if he were courageous enough to deal with the French community from Ontario just in the same way as our English compatriots are treated in Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, if governments from New Brunswick, from Ontario and possibly from Manitoba could take concrete measures to stop this policy of assimilation of French-speaking people who live in those provinces, this would be perceived by a majority of Quebecers as a determination on English Canadian's part to establish at last a true equality in Canada. While most of the language problems are beyond the scope of the federal government since it lacks jurisdiction over education, still it must ensure equal language opportunities for all in all federal institutions. Many projects have been accomplished these last few years. Suffice to mention that the rate of management positions held by French-speaking Canadians in the federal public service has gone up from 12 to 20 per cent

[Mr. Duclos.]

between 1965 and 1976. It is encouraging to see that 32 per cent of federal civil servants under 35 are French-speaking, a reason to feel optimistic about our future. But we must not forget either that only 13 per cent of the federal civil servants who earn more than \$30,000 a year are French Canadians. Besides, there are still too many organizations in our federal departments which do not seem to care very much to ensure a fair French presence at senior levels.

According to the last annual report of the Canadian Public Service Commission, the Anti-Inflation Board does not have one single French-speaking member among its 18 senior officers. In the agriculture and national defence departments, less than 5 per cent of management jobs are held by French Canadians. The Departments of Veteran Affairs, Finance and Energy, Mines and Resources, have only 5 to 10 per cent French-speaking Canadians among senior officers. Even then, those are filling only 10 to 15 per cent of management jobs in the following departments and organizations: the Department of Transport, the Canadian Transport Commission, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the National Energy Board, the Department of National Revenue and the Department of Science and Technology.

Mr. Speaker, in spite of significant progress during the last decade, it is evident that we have not yet a true sharing between French speaking and English speaking Canadians in public administration. Therefore we must accelerate the hiring of French speaking public employees, but particularly we must positively recognize the right for the employee to work in the language of his choice in federal public administration. It is essential that French speaking people have the opportunity to use their language in doing their job, because they can show their full capacity and their career could be badly affected.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, we will have to amend the federal Official Languages Act within a few months. Even though it is possible for people under that law, to communicate in the language of their choice with the federal administration, we cannot say the same concerning the right to work in French. As French speaking people would not commit their language rights to a legislation which would be limited in scope, and which might be interpreted, as we have seen recently, in many ways by courts, I urge the government to amend that legislation in order to clear up any ambiguity and to make a true language rights charter which would serve equally English speaking and French speaking people.

Mr. Speaker, recently the government reiterated in a paper entitled "A National Understanding" tabled before the House by the Secretary of State, that he wants to institute language equality across our country. Sometimes I wonder whether the government is really determined to go beyond a simple statement of principles when I think of the unfairness demonstrated by Air Canada which still forbids its French speaking mechanics to work in their language in Montreal workshops, and when I consider the government takes no action in face of that shocking situation. It is evident that the federal government would gain much credibility for the French speaking Quebec-