

*Official Languages*

The protest movement and the separatist movement that have come into being in Quebec are a direct result of the fact that although much was being said at the federal level about bilingualism and biculturalism, for purposes of appeasement apparently, the talk remained concerned with policy—and never reached the legislation stage.

Today, Bill C-120 brings us something tangible. This bill will considerably undermine the validity of arguments put forward by those people in Quebec who argue that it is impossible at the federal level to derive advantages from their culture and their language.

Mr. Speaker, if this bill is to become an instrument of national unity, it will have to be explained clearly to the population, especially where it looks like an indirect means of taking away from the English-speaking majority its established rights.

This legislation does not mean that both English and French will have to be spoken all over Canada. Those who have explained in this way this legislation to their constituents have obviously been doing this in bad faith, and they belong to that group of extremists I mentioned at the beginning. The sole purpose of this legislation is to recognize in practice what existed already in theory by virtue of the constitution.

● (4:40 p.m.)

At this stage, I would like to put a question to some of my colleagues who raise basic objections to this bill. I would like to know if Bill C-120 deprives the English-speaking majority in this country of any right? I would like to know if Bill C-120 is contrary to the claims or historic rights of English-speaking Canadians in this country?

I examined the text of the bill from every angle, but I never reached the conclusion that this measure deprived of any right the English-speaking majority in this country. The sole purpose of this legislation is to correct an injustice which had existed for a long time, while we neglected to give French Canadians the same opportunity as the English Canadians.

If this is not the meaning of the bill and if one absolutely wants to block it Mr. Speaker—because obviously it would insure for French Canadians the respect not of some privileges but of their rights—we can wonder what the devil are French Canadians doing in parliament? If we cannot agree on the objectives of Bill C-120, and if we are not capable

of obtaining from the English-speaking majority, not concessions, but quite simply the recognition of fundamental rights which the French-Canadian nation has always enjoyed since Confederation, we can wonder what we are doing here.

Mr. Speaker, we often like to say, when we travel abroad, that we come from a bilingual and bicultural country.

When I went to the United Nations from 1960 to 1962, I was extremely surprised to find that some delegates of member nations did not even know there were six million French Canadians in our country. Why? Because our representatives at the United Nations, most of the time, only spoke one language. In fact, when I arrived at the United Nations in 1960, representatives of eighteen French-speaking African nations were quite surprised to meet French-speaking Canadians. Sometimes I was humiliated to have these people meet our Canadian senior officials in the United Nations who could not speak French.

Often we like to say that Canada's prestige lies in the fact that we are a bilingual country. But, faced with concrete facts such as is the case today when considering Bill C-120, some people raise all kinds of objections saying that this will create difficulties.

The administration of this legislation will obviously create difficulties. How shall we succeed in changing our constitution, in building a new Canada, in changing certain customs, without being faced with difficulties? Obviously, we shall meet with them and efforts will be necessary. But we French-Canadians, those of good will at least—there are still a good number of them—we are ready to face the challenge, to study the problems with our English-speaking colleagues, in an effort to build for future generations, a country which will be a good place to live.

Whenever we travelled abroad—as many of my colleagues have done, and spoke French in an embassy, we were unable to find anyone to understand us. We have sometimes visited French-speaking countries where the ambassador spoke only English. He could not even say "Bonjour" in French. It was humiliating for a French Canadian to have to address his own ambassador, who could not even speak his language.

We hope—obviously this will take some time—that this bill will cope with the situation, as a matter of justice and not as a favour. I want to make myself very clear, because whenever French Canadians express