

My colleague the hon. member for Matapédia-Matane and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. De Bané) and myself have introduced several private bills in this House in the last three years to bring in these changes. Two years ago the government announced in the Speech from the Throne that they would fulfil these expectations. Today we have the opportunity to take a decision and I ask hon. members from both sides in the House to give due consideration to this aspect of the resolution. I know it is not perfect and I will elaborate on this later in my speech, but I would like hon. members to be fully aware that all Quebecers who voted No last May did so with the conviction that a new federalism would start with the inclusion in the Canadian constitution of equality of the French and English languages.

● (1750)

And the critics we have heard in the last few days have jumped on this type of bandwagon. Those who have been saying lately that this move does not meet the expectations of a renewed federalism do not know what has been going on in Quebec in the last four years. They do not know that the new constitution must first establish clearly under what conditions and in which context Francophones and Anglophones will have to keep living together in this country.

This does not mean that the provision contained in this proposed resolution will necessarily succeed in allaying all concerns. The Commissioner of Official Languages once again has expressed other concerns regarding the language of work in the civil service. The proposed resolution does not contain any provision to this effect. Yet, in June, 1973, this Parliament stated, and I quote:

—civil servants should generally be able to discharge their duties within the Canadian government in the official language of their choice.

The conditions in which such a right can be exercised should of course be qualified. There is no Canadian in this House who does not recognize the special geographic conditions of the country, the regionalisms, the special needs of each constituent of our country.

Now that we have the opportunity to solve that problem once and for all, during consideration in committee we will have to ask the commissioner to provide the necessary explanations so that the resolution will finally answer all our expectations.

For several days now, we have heard a number of criticisms about Bill 101 according to which this resolution would undermine Francization efforts in Quebec. During the next few minutes therefore I would like to answer each of those criticisms, because if I were convinced that by passing that resolution we would jeopardize the future of French Quebec, I would be the first to object to it in the House. However, I feel that it is far from endangering the survival and development of French Quebec. The resolution is the specific answer to one of the most harrowing phenomena in Quebec.

The Constitution

First I would like to speak about what is commonly called the Quebec clause of Bill 101. We know that under that legislation Canadians from other provinces who settle down in Quebec must register their child in a French school unless they obtain a certificate proving that they will not remain more than three years in Quebec. The resolution under consideration repeals that clause of Bill 101 and I think that we should be glad about it.

The Premier of Quebec admitted, in 1977, at the time Bill 101 was passed, that that clause made him uneasy. He told us he had misgivings about balkanizing Quebec.

At the Montreal conference in 1978 he was prepared to abolish that clause provided other Canadian provinces reciprocated, that is pledged to guarantee the language rights of Francophones outside Quebec.

Today, we guarantee reciprocity in section 23(2) of the proposed resolution.

Quebec should not come and tell us we are acting against the views it held towards its Canadian partner. When one tries to grasp the extent of the problem, one realizes that the number of people to whom that provision of Bill 101 applies is, all things considered, quite small. In 1977-78, 915 people got a permit to enrol their children in an English school because they were either members of the armed forces, diplomats, students or researchers or other workers from other Canadian provinces coming to Quebec for a definite period of time.

There were 1,541 in 1978-79 and only 994 in 1979-80. Is that a threat to the cultural security of Francophones in Quebec? We must not kid ourselves or kid the people.

To say that this proposed resolution will allow all immigrants to send their children to English schools is really to misread the proposed resolution. And that fear the Premier of Quebec is sustaining in the consciences and minds of Quebecers must be denounced. Section 23 says that a citizen of Canada whose mother tongue is French or English has the right to send his children to a minority language school. Specifically it means that an immigrant Australian, American, Spanish, Italian or from any country in the world, coming to Quebec is still going to send his children to French schools. That is what Bill 101 says and section 23(1) does not change that at all. Consequently, it is a falsehood, a mistake and a monumental fraud to say that immigrants to Quebec will be entirely free to send their children to English school.

The proposed resolution is that English-speaking citizens whose mother tongue is English, whether they were born in Canada or became Canadians afterwards, will enjoy the opportunity of enrolling their children in a school of the language of their choice. However, Mr. Speaker, one has to be aware of how far-reaching these changes can be. We should not frighten the people to the point where Quebecers will be faced with something they will no longer be able to control.