

House of Commons

English-speaking member rises to speak in this house, it is quite natural that he should feel more at home in his mother tongue, as would a French-speaking member in his own.

Again, I thank the right hon. Prime Minister of Canada. May I also thank and congratulate the representatives of every political party in the house for joining hands in providing this house with a simultaneous translation system.

Mr. Heward Graffey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to take this opportunity of thanking the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) for his initiative. During the election campaign, and ever since, I have always said that my riding of Brome-Missisquoi is like Canada, on a smaller scale, made up as it is of people of both great races, of both great cultures. That is why I have always contended that my constituency is a little Canada.

On behalf of my electors, as well as on my own behalf, I thank the right hon. Prime Minister. I draw the attention of the house to the fact that I am one of the first English-speaking members ever to be elected in a riding where a majority of the population is French-speaking. That is why I want to take this opportunity of thanking the right hon. Prime Minister on behalf of the electors of Brome-Missisquoi.

(Text):

Mr. Speaker, very briefly I should like to say this. Largely because I am one of the first English speaking members of this house elected by a district of whose people approximately 75 per cent speak the French language, I should like to profit by this occasion to thank the Prime Minister for inaugurating this legislation. I have always said, and I repeat now, that my district is really a little Canada. Its population is mainly made up of people speaking the two languages and having two cultures. In addition we have representatives of all those new Canadians who, of course help to form the real glory and force of Canada. In the name of my electors I would like to say thank you once again to the Prime Minister, and to tell the house how very much this legislation will be welcomed in my district.

Mr. Laurier Regnier (St. Boniface): I should also like to thank the Prime Minister for introducing this legislation. St. Boniface is also a little Canada, but in my area the division between French speaking and English speaking citizens is about fifty-fifty. We also have representatives of the other nationalities who have settled in Canada.

I believe this is a great step toward Canadian unity, and that it will help all

Canadians realize that our leader is a true friend of national unity. I would also like to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Assiniboia for the support they have given to this measure.

As the hon. member for Assiniboia has stated, this is but one step in the right direction. I know that other measures will be passed in due course to accomplish a real unity within our country. No one could ever say that this government favours one section of the Canadian people as against another. We are all completely equal, we respect one another and we get along as a single nation though we do speak two basic languages.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I should also like to thank the Prime Minister for having introduced this measure, and to express my pleasure at the support given by this house.

I would like to mention one other matter, however, which I feel might be taken into consideration in relation to the change we are now making. I notice in this connection that the Prime Minister himself sometimes wears one of the small earphones which I have also used on a number of occasions and which I have noticed other members using from time to time. I was wondering whether an extra box could not be added to the simultaneous translation box so that we could still plug into the amplifying set. I have found this set to be useful on many occasions, and I think if just another section could be added it would be advantageous to other hon. members.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the house that if the Prime Minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Following the example of the Leader of the Opposition, I do not think I could possibly do better than bring this discussion to an end by saying the following.

(Translation):

In conclusion, I wish to thank all hon. members for their contribution to this debate.

(Text):

Having said that, I would like to mention that over the years—and this goes back for more than 40 years—I have consistently read the French classics, including the works of Moliere, Bossuet and Racine. While I have been able to read and understand them, I have never been able to convey my thoughts spontaneously and without notes in the French language.

I think the house may be interested in an event which took place recently. Henri Laurier, the grand-nephew of Sir Wilfrid Laurier,