

*Bilingual Currency—Mr. Dorion*

I must say, sir, even if my motives differ, that I perfectly agree with the hon. member for Bellechasse on the principle of his resolution, and, I wish to briefly state the reasons which prompt me to support his motion and request my English speaking colleagues to do likewise.

The resolution of the hon. member for Bellechasse expresses the wish that our currency, in the future, instead of being unilingual may be bilingual; namely, that it should bear, in Canada and abroad, the stamp of the dual civilization from which has sprung the Canadian entity. Canada, by its origin, being a bilingual country formed by the union freely assented to by two great races, its currency should therefore bear both French and English inscriptions.

The arguments in support of this wish are numerous; while the objections which, heretofore, have been made against it are, to my mind, not very sound. The hon. member for Bellechasse quoted, the other day, the reply made by Mr. Fielding, formerly Finance Minister, under the Liberal regime, to a similar motion introduced by the hon. member for Montmagny (Mr. LaVergne)—a veteran of the French Canadian struggles, ever consistent in his stand.

The former Minister of Finance replied that such a reform did not seem to be sought by the people as a whole. What a strange way for a statesman to solve such an issue. Is it not the duty of a statesman to safeguard the interests of the people, solve automatically their problems and meet their wishes? When it is a question of balancing the budget, levying new imposts and taxing labour and wealth, do our statesmen wait until the people send in petitions?

If the Hon. Mr. Fielding came back to the house, perhaps, he would give the same excuse on being informed what is happening at the treasury office at Quebec. No, again I say, I do not think that any sound argument can be set up against such a resolution. The excuses given are worthless as compared with the advantages of moral and material order that our country would derive from such a reform.

What better advertisement in this country and abroad could we have than Canadian bilingual currency to emphasize the harmony which is supposed to exist here, to emphasize that treaties in this country have some value; signatures, an authority; the constitution, respect and loyalty.

The League of Nations, of which our country is a component part, has recently taken up the problems of Manchuria. Previously, the question of the Tyrol had been submitted

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to it. On some other occasion, minority questions will crop up, which it will have to study, just like the numerous other questions it has been called upon to deal with. Canada, itself may be called upon, one day or another to sit as judge and express its views. How absurd it would seem to other nations, if, here, in this country, we do not first begin by recognizing a minority, officially and legally acknowledged to be on an equal footing with the majority, by recognizing it not only in such an such a sphere but throughout all the activities of our national life.

But, one may object, on what statute do you base your contentions? Without, for the moment, referring back to the surrender of Quebec, in 1759, may I, sir, quote section 133 of the British North America Act, which the hon. Solicitor General (Mr. Dupré) and the hon. member for Ottawa (Mr. Chevrier) also quoted:

Either the English or the French language may be used by any person in the debates of the houses of the parliament of Canada and of the houses of the legislature of Quebec; and both those languages shall be used in the respective records and journals of those houses; and either of those languages may be used by any person or in any pleading or process in or issuing from any court of Canada established under this act, and in or from all or any of the courts of Quebec.

The acts of the parliament of Canada and of the legislature of Quebec shall be printed and published in both those languages.

Truly, I admit that no special mention is made about currency in the provisions of the act; but does that signify that our currency must be stamped in the English language, that it be only unilingual? Where is it mentioned, in connection with currency, that the English language enjoys more extensive rights than the French language? Why should a text be made out in one language and not in the other? The act does not provide that the official language in this country will be English, except in certain spheres and specific cases, or that the French language will enjoy equal rights. Not at all. The act stipulates that the two languages have official rights. However, it goes further. It even prescribes the use of the two languages in certain cases. Does that mean that it is prohibited to use the two languages on currency, because the act makes no such mention? I repeat it, the two languages have official rights because it is clear that, in the minds of the Fathers of Confederation, the use of the two languages constitute one of the characteristic features of Canada.

To those who may be tempted to state: If we place French and English inscriptions on our currency, who assures us that, to-morrow,