

**Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East):** I hear some laughter. I am one of those who believe that the Senate is a useful institution in our parliamentary set-up. I will admit there have been times when I have felt, like many others, that they could be doing more useful work than was being done, but that is not something inherent to the system.

The hon. gentleman speaks about a study of the problems of municipal government to be instituted by the federal government. Well, before his predecessor became leader of the opposition and while he was still premier of Ontario, I heard him deprecate at the 1945 federal-provincial conference anything being dealt with on a national scale that was already being dealt with by the provincial authorities. I know that in that regard the premier of my own province is, shall I say, more sensitive and has a more tender skin than Hon. George Drew had when he was premier of Ontario.

Now, national unity is very important to this country. We have to be careful to keep a majority of the reasonably-minded Canadians on our side and not have them feel that we are trying to centralize and sabotage the work of the fathers of confederation. There will be some who will make that assertion no matter what we do. No matter what precautions we try to take to avoid it being done there will be some who would affirm, if we were going to do something about municipal government, that we were aiming at destroying the Catholic religion and the French language in the province of Quebec. Could anything be more silly, more groundless than that?

I remember there were some, not many, who were scandalized when, sitting not in this seat but in the one next to it, I ventured to suggest that the day would come when the ability to use both official languages would be required of all those who wanted to sit on the front benches either on this side or on the other side of the house. At the time it was a scandal to make that kind of suggestion. To how many hon. gentlemen should I now extend my congratulations for the serious efforts they have made to indicate that they would like to speak the French language as well as they speak the English language?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East):** They have taken considerable pains to do that because they came to feel it was something that was going to be helpful toward bringing about a feeling of national unity from one ocean to the other in this country. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is good citizenship always to be just as careful as we can to avoid

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offending even the tenderest skin in the suggestions we make about the activities of the federal government in fields which are enumerated as being within provincial jurisdiction under section 92 of the British North America Act.

This does not mean that we should not be tending toward a Canadian nationhood. The fathers of confederation intended Canada to be a nation and we all intend Canada to be a nation. But they recognized that the way to make a fruitful start in that respect was along the lines of the British North America Act. Some changes have been made in the act by agreement. Sometimes there has not been agreement and the changes have been made notwithstanding. So far I think we are in a position where we do feel that there is a more widespread feeling of Canadianism than there has been in the past. I hope that will continue and that we can do those things, but do them in such a way that we will not frighten anyone with the bugaboo that the religion and the language of the people of my own race in the province of Quebec are going to be taken away from them.

The hon. gentleman made some comments about external affairs. I am sure the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) will give a fuller report of what took place at the NATO council meeting than I could give secondhand from the reports I got, and I think it would be unnecessary duplication for me to attempt to say very much about it. But there is one thing I want to say to the hon. gentleman. I have known the Secretary of State for External Affairs for a number of years, and for a number of years I have felt that he was dedicating his life to the service of his country. I have felt—and I have said this to him on more than one occasion—that anyone who was dedicating his life to the service of his country had the right to select where he thought his services would be the most useful to his country. Since I have become Prime Minister, on more than one occasion when there were other possible attractions or things that I felt might be possible attractions I have said to him that it was of course his responsibility to decide whether, in being thus attracted, he could be of greater service to his country than he could in continuing to head a Department of External Affairs which has acquired a reputation throughout the world that is quite creditable to a nation of 16 million people.

The maintenance of world peace and the establishment of multilateral trade, these things which are international in character, are extremely important to the well-being of the Canadian nation. But I have ventured