

thing that we welcome and embrace. It is at the heart of our idea of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roberts: There are, of course, many other elements of national unity and we have talked about them in this debate. I am not suggesting that bilingualism is the sole pillar of unity in this country. It is essential to the fabric of this country and to the survival of this country that Canadians accept it as a strand that is to be welcomed and appreciated, not something to be scathingly diminished as the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday. He reminds me of a man who stumbles over opportunity, picks himself up, dusts himself off, and races away from that opportunity. Two official languages give opportunity to this country and instead of slighting it we should support it, welcome it, and make it the idea of the country we are trying to build for ourselves, our children, and our children's children.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roberts: If the hon. gentleman wishes to maintain that idea of Canada he expressed in debate yesterday, it illustrates the fundamental division between this side of the House and that side,—a division on which at one stage the people of this country will have to pronounce.

I should like to refer to the consequent comments of the hon. gentleman. Speaking of the situation in Quebec, as reported at page 7320 of *Hansard* he said:

If they have doubts about the future of their language and their culture within the boundaries of their province, they do know that their National Assembly, which represents a population more than 80 percent French-speaking, will always be much more conscious and more capable to act to preserve the French language and culture than any other legislature, including the parliament of Canada.

That is also a fundamental divergence from the position taken on this side of the House. It is our argument to French-speaking Quebecers that the maintenance of Canada, of a federation, which contains two official languages, is a better and safer means of protecting the language and culture about which they care than if Quebec separated and became isolated from the other contingent parts of Canada.

It is an overriding objective of our policy to ensure that there is a context for the survival and flourishing of the French language within the province of Quebec and outside it. That is an essential preoccupation of this government, and we do not believe it can be safely left to a provincial government alone.

I want to say to the hon. gentleman that the argument he presented is the argument the separatists presented in the province of Quebec—that the legislature of Quebec and the government of Quebec are a better safeguard for what they care about than the maintenance of the federal system. If the hon. gentleman believes that—I hope he does not, but that is what he said—that, too, is something upon which the country will soon have to pronounce. I say that seriously because—and I think also of the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield)—it seems to me that the Conservative party has now brought

forward an idea of Canada in their approach to official languages and what they wish this country to be, that I for one cannot possibly accept. I think that is of fundamental importance.

I do not want to conclude without referring to the speech of the Leader of the New Democratic Party. The major part of his speech was interesting but I do not have time to discuss it all. I want to refer to his closing remarks, however, because there too I find a rejection of the idea of Canada that we are trying to build on this side of the House—a clear rejection which I think is of extraordinary importance. In the last paragraph of his speech, reported at page 7325 of *Hansard*, he said:

What I think is really required in our country, more than anything else, is a leadership which says to the people of Quebec and to ordinary Canadians outside the province that there are, in fact, two great cultures. I say that to the Prime Minister who tries to pretend that somehow it is simply a multicultural society. It is multicultural, but he knows as well as I do that there is a predominant Francophone culture established as a society in the province of Quebec, and there is the English community outside of it.

I say to him that his idea of Canada which is that there is one country, two languages and two cultures, is fundamentally in opposition to the idea this government has developed. What we stand for is one country, two languages, and a plurality of cultures.

• (1800)

Mr. Paproski: At election time.

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman wants to fight an election on that issue I, for one, am prepared to enter the lists; and because of my personal friendship with the hon. member I should like to see him return after the election, but there would not be many beside him on the benches opposite.

Mr. Paproski: I meant you only talk about other cultures at election time.

Mr. Roberts: I say to the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby—I am sorry he is not here, but I am sure the party's former leader will convey my words to him—that he should be precise and know what those words of his mean. I hope he is not saying he espouses a bicultural country. Our diversity of cultural heritages is not something to be fobbed off, but something to be supported, something which should thrive, for it is an essential, integral part of what we are trying to build.

An hon. Member: Only at election time.

Mr. Roberts: Let me also say, because I do not have much more time, that the situation of—

[*Translation*]

... Francophones outside Quebec and that minority is very important. That is the core of the policy we are following. That is not something to publish or use during partisan debates. We are really concerned about creating a situation whereby these groups will be able to preserve their culture so that it may survive and flourish outside and inside Quebec as well.