

*Official Languages*

Mr. Speaker, you will agree with me that French Canadians are concerned about the turn of events, and that, in turn, they plead with English-speaking Canadians to understand them, in order that Canada may be maintained as the country we want it to be.

The case of the Aramaic language shows, as I have explained a moment ago, that effective means of communication can develop the influence of a language. Aramaean nomads went to Mesopotamia, adopted a similar writing to that of the Phoenician,—a running and efficient handwriting,—which resulted in the establishment of Aramaic as the international language throughout the East, beyond the sphere of influence of those who spoke the language. Since business papers were written in that language, it spread very rapidly through the great commercial channels and, in some countries, it became the court language.

Another factor, Mr. Speaker, is isolation which may preserve the existence of a language. That was the case for Frisian, Lapish, Romansch, Welsh, Irish and Scotch.

Besides, that is the reason why some separatists say: Even if we are isolated, we shall continue to protect our French language. Isolation is a way for minority languages to avoid being absorbed by majority languages.

Some languages survive longer than others. How long does it take for a language to disappear when survival conditions no longer exist? It took a thousand years for Coptic to disappear from Egypt, while in one generation Norse had disappeared in France.

The language that survives the longest is the one that generally boasts the most literary works. Latin and Greek are excellent examples. They are taught even now as second language in our schools.

All the causes I have just enumerated, Mr. Speaker, give some variations of the main dimensions of bilingualism: distribution, stability and function that affect the individual, the language and the group. The effects on the individual may be emotional, intellectual and cultural. Some of them have been considered as hindrances, other as advantages. Let us first consider the so-called hindrances.

• (5:30 p.m.)

As far as the emotional effects of bilingualism are concerned, it has been maintained that bilingual children lack self-confidence or have a low level of maturity, that they show symptoms of introversion and that

[Mr. Dumont.]

they have the feeling that sometimes their thinking is not clear.

It is maintained also that, in South Africa, since bilingual pupils are instructed in the tongue which is less familiar to them, emotional troubles develop.

The so-called intellectual inconveniences of bilingualism are connected to the part played by the language in the way the child learns to think. The younger the child, the more important is the part played by the language in his intellectual development. According to some, bilingual children cannot express themselves with precision; they have difficulty in handling abstract concepts and the rational faculties of the child, discouraged by bilingualism, interfere with his development of ideas or concepts.

That is why, faced with the incoming tide of that English unilingualism, we, in the province of Quebec, have seen bills such as the one passed in the legislature that in Quebec the working language be the French language.

However the fact remains that there are cultural impediments. Some maintain that a bilingual person is deprived of cultural roots or has an hybrid culture and cannot reach deeply in neither one nor the other cultures and thus remains a marginal person.

Undoubtedly bilingualism has an effect at least on one of the languages and in the end changes it or suppresses it. Generally speaking, it is the dominant language which influences the other, as can be assessed by the number of words borrowed from the other tongue.

When in a given country, a language other than the original one prevails for some time, the latter is never the same again.

To wit, the state of English after the Norman conquest, and that of the Persian language after Arab control.

In some cases, a hybrid or a creole tongue is born, as in the case of Haiti and New Guinea.

When a language is submitted to the influence of another, people often react to save it by setting up various organizations, by launching out campaigns to rid it of the words borrowed from the prevailing language. But few of these movements ever meet with success, Mr. Speaker, unless they are fostered by outside conditions.

Generally, the State does not do away with the tongue of a minority; it merely ignores it and apathy does the rest. In this way, bilingualism leads ultimately to the complete