

Official Languages

years old, affects deeply all those who sit in this house.

I think it is wrong to say that in making the remarks they made some hon. members were animated by a desire to see division in this country. I heard the hon. member talking about the visit the Prime Minister made to the hon. member's province. I only wish the Prime Minister had made trips to all other parts of the country during the last few months in order to explain this bill. This measure is not a matter of high-flown sentiments such as were recounted by the hon. member. This measure needed clarification and detailed and careful explanation. Obviously the message was not taken to many parts of Canada because many people still do not understand what is involved here. There is an onus or responsibility on a government introducing a bill of this kind to make certain the measure is understood, and understood well in all parts of the country. It is quite obvious from what I have seen and heard that the government has failed lamentably in discharging this responsibility.

Some hon. members have said they sit here as members representing eastern Canada, Quebec or western Canada. If I were to claim any geographic location I should probably call myself a northern Canadian. But having taken the oath of office before the distinguished Clerk of this house, I can only speak on this issue as a Canadian member of parliament.

In considering this legislation one must consider all aspects of it; one must consider its advantages and defects. With any piece of legislation, that becomes a complex process. Any hon. member who is to cast his vote on a bill must properly assess and evaluate his position and the approach he takes to the legislation. On the scales on which one weighs carefully the virtues and defects of a measure one can put on one side all those things about the measure which are good, on the other side all those things which are bad, and consider just how the scales balance. If one were to take this legislation on its own, without considering the very deep and fundamental issue we are involved with here, I would have to say this is not good legislation. But here, Mr. Speaker, it is essential to place on the good side of the scales the intangible and delicate substance of national unity.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Baldwin: Having done that and surveyed how the scales balance, I can come to

no other conclusion than that I must support this bill and vote for it.

I will not traverse the ground other hon. members have traversed since, quite properly, Your Honour would rule me out of order on the ground I was being repetitious. Certainly in the last two or three weeks debate has been repetitious. Therefore, since I wish to remain within the four corners of the rules of the house I will not deal with ground that has been covered before. Nevertheless there are two particular issues having to do with this bill which require comment.

I think the Prime Minister and the government are approaching this matter with that degree of rigidity which, I am afraid, forms the basis of the government's approach to government business. It may well be that the right hon. gentleman will be known to posterity as the right hon. member for *rigor mortis*, largely because of his rigid stance.

One cannot legislate completely and effectively in the area we are considering here with measures of this kind. It is most difficult to do so unless you have the full co-operation and understanding of the people of the country. There is a fallacy abroad in many parts of the country that you can legislate virtue. If that were so you would only need one statute a year saying, "Be it resolved that all people must be happy. Anyone caught being unhappy is subject to a penalty and must pay a fine." The usual third clause would be, of course, "The government may enact all regulations, decrees and orders in council to ensure that everyone is happy."

But here it is not that simple. Having examined the issues, having read the bill carefully and having studied the constitutional background, I am convinced that we are enacting an administrative measure. Virtually all those things the government seeks to have us approve are things which the government of its own volition could bring about without the concurrence of this house or the other place. We might well have had, and I should have preferred this, a resolution of this house to the other place expressing the views of hon. members and saying that in their opinion there are two official languages in this country and that it would be desirable for the people of this country, so far as it lies within the constitutional jurisdiction of the federal government and in co-operation with the provincial governments, to work toward the greater acceptance of the two official languages. A resolution like that could easily have been concurred in.