

*Official Languages*

to this bill. Others, equally competent are of the opinion that there is. That is something which may be decided in the future by some court, if the matter is brought to court. However, I suggest that is not something on which the house should spend very much time.

Our problem is to deal with this bill in terms of the objectives it seeks to accomplish for greater unity and greater understanding among Canadians. Our purpose is to see to it that the bill is implemented in a way which will promote greater unity and understanding and not implement it in a way which may cause even more divisiveness in the future than we have had in the past. I submit that these are the purposes to which our attention should be directed, and they are the purposes to which our attention has been directed. A good many of the amendments moved by members of the official opposition and by some of us have been directed to making the bill better from the point of view of the objective of national unity and national understanding. That should be our purpose in this parliament, not a rather arid legal argument.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words about the amendment.

Since the hon. member for Cumberland-Colchester North (Mr. Coates) has asked me what stand I would take if this bill meant to abolish the French language in Canada—it seems that he wants to imply that the bill under consideration tends to abolish the use of the English language in Canada—I shall answer him that it is not at all the purpose of this bill.

The amendment is intended to refer the bill to the supreme court or to a court authorized to decide upon its constitutionality.

Mr. Speaker, let the hon. member from Nova Scotia compare the situation which prevails now in his province, where there are conflicts with regard to the French language, with that which is found in Quebec.

Was it necessary to appeal to the Canadian constitution to have both official languages respected in the province of Quebec? If somebody attempted to abolish one of the two languages in the province of Quebec—the English language for instance—the hon. member would be the first to say we are mentally retarded and that we do not understand the importance of national unity.

[Mr. Lewis.]

Does this concept of unity, Mr. Speaker, apply to the sole province of Quebec? In that case, I would be the first to object to discontinuing the teaching of English in Quebec. In my opinion, and from the point of view of constitutionality, the province of Quebec should follow the example of Nova Scotia where they abolished in 1864 the use of the French language at school.

In 1871, French was abolished in the New Brunswick schools. In 1890, it was abolished, as an official language, in Manitoba. In 1915, French was abolished, for all practical purposes, in Ontario schools. Was the constitution invoked at that time?

If, in Quebec, an attempt had been made at that time to abolish the English language, would the hon. member not have risen against the fact that the English were being discriminated against? He would not have cared a hoot about the constitution.

But, at this time when the leader of the Progressive Conservative party accepts the principle of the two official languages, we still find some mentally retarded in the Conservative party who would prevent national unity at any cost, by launching a useless debate here in the house which once again will incite the English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians to tear each other apart, while the problem in Canada is not one of languages but one of economics.

Even if the right to two official languages throughout Canada were to be recognized, the retarded member for Cumberland-Colchester North would not be obliged to learn French. I hope he never learns it because he does not deserve to know two languages.

Mr. Speaker, there are limits to being spoken to in this way. The Progressive Conservative party cannot even agree on that matter. Why not? Because there are people who are trying to play politics with the question of the official languages.

Mr. Speaker, national unity must not be tampered with. The basic principle of national unity, that people be tolerant of one another, must be respected. But we find in the Progressive Conservative party disunity which spreads to or is felt in all the Canadian provinces.

• (4:40 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, the amendment moved by the Progressive Conservative member is a stupid amendment, which is going to widen the gap existing at present between two ethnic groups in this country. And that is why