

*Official Languages*

this country. There is no objection on their side to the role of French as the language of instruction in public schools where it is warranted by general demand.

While recognizing and supporting the idea of a broad application of official bilingualism in Canada, the adherents of this attitude foresee the preservation of other ethnic languages in addition to the two official languages in bilingual provinces and districts, and in the context of regional bilingualism (English or French, plus another language) in provinces and districts where unilingualism (French or English) now prevails. However, in either case, the adoption of other ethnic languages as subjects of instruction is strongly emphasized.

There is a case, and a strong one, for official recognition by this country of languages and cultures other than English or French, providing they are of interest to a sufficient number of Canadians. I, therefore, feel that in dealing with this matter it is important to establish the basic principles on which we intend to operate.

I would say first, that in Canada the principle must be positive. We should put to one side national or racial prejudice. We should start on the assumption that in this nation, from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast, individuals have a right to the language and culture of their choice. We should also establish that it is the function and duty of the federal government to be the watchdog of minority cultural and linguistic rights in this nation, because there is no one in Canada who is not, in some way and under some circumstances, a member of a minority group. Some are in a majority in some areas, but in a minority in others; some control the situation in one region or even a province, but in another province find themselves in a minority. Therefore, no group is in a position to force or impose its will, and the only proper, reasonable and decent method in which to operate is by co-operation, not compulsion.

We in Canada have, as a nation, put to one side the theory of the melting pot, and if we do not want a melting pot nationally it becomes contradictory for certain groups in certain areas to be deemed a melting pot provincially. I may say that no group and no area is free of this kind of an approach, which in my estimation stultifies and destroys everything for which Canada stands. I want to make it clear that in political life there are no instant solutions. We must proceed on a step by step basis. We can only go as fast as the people will let us; but not to go as far as the people will let you is, in my mind, unjustifiable in this country at this time.

[Mr. Paproski.]

Therefore, I would assume we recognize in Canada the existence of the constitutional guarantees accorded in 1867 to English language and culture and French language and culture. These are the two languages of the 1867 constitution and I propose to refer to them as the constitutional languages. No one wants to change that. I would point out that those guarantees, will last as long as the constitution lasts and as long as the nation lasts. When the constitution is changed or if the nation founders, then a different picture will emerge.

I will not go into the history of the guarantees except to say that English Canada has safeguarded and protected a way of life just as French Canada has. As a result of the constitutional guarantees accorded in 1867, Canada has seen the emergence on the North America continent of the only bastion of French language and culture in America. I attribute this to Confederation, because in the melting pot society, where there were no such guarantees, there was no such emergence.

The question arises today whether these guarantees shall be extended. I think it is quite clear that French Canada entered Confederation on the understanding there would be protection for its language, culture and property laws. That protection was accorded in so far as French Canada existed in any substantial way at that time—the province of Quebec. We are now being told that unless those rights and guarantees extended to French Canada in 1867, in so far as Quebec was concerned—because the two terms at that time were practically identical—French Canadians will no longer be at home in Canada. French Canada now extends outside the bounds of the province of Quebec and this fact should be recognized in an extension of the cultural and linguistic guarantees of the 1867 constitution.

This argument establishes a distinction between French Canada—a linguistic, ethnic and cultural group enjoying certain traditional and constitutional rights in Canada—and the province of Quebec, one of the ten provinces. Without going into the argument whether Quebec is in fact the national, cultural and ethnical homeland of French Canada—because that argument must be settled within French Canada—or whether people in one section can be represented in cultural matters by a government for whom they cannot vote, I feel at the moment that the distinction between French Canada and Quebec is a valid one.