

*Official Languages*

through books is essentially technical and not in common use in conversation; thus it is a specialized knowledge. Unilingual French speaking people themselves cannot entirely get rid of that heavy dose of English structures because, as everyone of us, it is from their environment that they derive their unconscious knowledge of the use of a language. So it is normal that the more people are bilingual the greater the risks of linguistic confusion and that general contamination which eventually will reach even unilingual people.

The net result of that linguistic and cultural confusion is that, on the whole, French Canadians suffer from what I would call linguistic and cultural maladjustments.

Such psychoses result from the inner conflict created by the image of the perfect French the French-Canadian elite has traditionally presented to him, especially at school and, more recently, also on radio and television.

Social science researchers agree that a child acquires the basic structures of culture, language and personality before he goes to school. The linguistic and cultural environment that moulds the French-Canadian child is more or less hybrid. When he starts going to school, there will be added to the usual psychological confusion that of seeing his speech subjected to a series of new rules, and that practically amounts to the study of another language for him. It is as if he were told kindly that the environment he comes from, is not worth much and that he shall have to submit willingly to a complete transformation of his personality, to a personality transplant, as it were. As soon as he leaves the schoolroom, he feels psychologically embarrassed for borrowing structures that are so radically different from that of his environment. In fact, he is asked to play every day the impossible role of the hero gallantly fighting for the defence of his mother tongue.

● (4:20 p.m.)

This task is beyond the possibilities of a single individual, because nobody can fight, every instant, by swimming against the current in a linguistic and cultural environment which, in all normal societies, is designed to assist the individual and not to swallow him. Thus, the French Canadian loses most of his creative energies trying to rebuild and recreate consciously his language, through personal efforts, seeking to accomplish things which, in all normal societies, come naturally as a

gift from the gods. The burden often becomes so heavy that many French Canadians do not hesitate to adopt English, even among themselves. The disastrous effects of such an environment appear, even in our schools in Quebec, and the efforts made over the years to try and correct this situation unfortunately have not yet produced very tangible results.

I would like to conclude those remarks with a quotation from a first rate French Canadian intellectual a former editorial writer of the distinguished French newspaper *Le Devoir*, Mr. Jean-Marc Léger. He said:

The most flexible structures, the best of balanced programs, the most modern and best equipped institutions, free complete schooling at all levels, will not prevent a people from remaining culturally underdeveloped, intellectually handicapped and socially outclassed, if some jargon replaces his language. A nation that does not master adequately a language, its language, and that does not live with that language is unable to express itself, to communicate, to invent, incapable also of deep and creative thinking: it is at best translating and imitating.

Mr. Speaker, this is just about the situation in which the French Canadian finds himself in Canada. It is for these reasons that I approve without any reservation whatsoever the bill on official languages. The same thing happened in Louisiana where they decided to adopt French, which is now taught in schools. I see no value other than that in the bill on the official languages. Still, that throughout Canada, in all the federal services, one should be able to use his mother tongue is quite an achievement which I should not want to be—I do not agree at all with the right hon. Prime Minister and the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier)—a partial or the start of a solution to the problem of national unity in Canada: the latter is an entirely different problem.

The problem of national unity lies in the need for the French Canadians to be themselves and to command respect as such, without necessarily being subjected to translation, or imitation; only by being true to themselves will they participate in the development of the whole country. That is why any conditional option or concept deserves to be studied.

A while ago I was listening to the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) whose opinion I naturally respect. However, if it should occur to anyone here that nothing should be spared for Canadian unity, and that this can be summed up by saving the framework of confederation as it now stands, there is a lack of goodwill.