

*Official Languages*

Firstly, the question of human dignity is deeply involved. If, by decree or legislation, or by constitutional guarantee the languages—and thereby cultures of only two of Canada's ethnic groups are selected for survival—while Canadians speaking other languages are singled out for virtual immediate assimilation—then such legislation offends human dignity and contravenes fundamental human rights. Such legislation is morally indefensible.

Secondly; the very basis of our democratic system is implicated. If preservation of language is important and essential to the survival of the French and English, it is equally essential to the Ukrainians, Germans, Italians, Eskimos, Indians and all others for the very same reason. In democracy one cannot apply one set of standards and moral principles to one group of citizens and a different standard to another group of Canadians.

Thirdly, there is also an important aspect of real material benefit. Recognition of language rights of any community is reflected in definite material benefits, while a restrictive regulation, whether of direct or indirect character, means exclusion of the community from access to those benefits. Recognition of a language means growth and development of the community. It evokes a greater sense of pride. Exclusion or restriction of language rights of the community means the negation and a narrowing of horizons in a community.

Finally, means for language and cultural activities are derived from taxation in various forms from all people who make up this nation. In the distribution of these taxation revenues it is only just to consider its source and make a sincere attempt to provide the services for cultural development of all communities.

When Mr. Dzenick made this statement before a large group in Edmonton, he was speaking on behalf of over 500,000 people, according to the 1961 census, who were very much concerned with the effects of this bill.

● (9:40 p.m.)

I have another clipping from the *Edmonton Journal* of February 20, 1969. I hesitate to express any personal viewpoint in this chamber because others who have done so have been branded as bigots and narrow-minded politicians. I think I can serve my purpose best by putting on record the views of some respectable ethnic leaders across Canada. The headline of the article in my hand reads, "What the 'other ethnic groups' want". It reads:

Spokesmen for the "other ethnic groups" in the Edmonton Area say they don't want special privileges for themselves.

They say they want to be Canadians, not hyphenated Canadians, in the multi-coloured mosaic of this nation's life. But by the same token, they believe French-Canadians are not justified in claiming special privileges for themselves.

French-Canadian demands are seen as reasonable in Quebec, parts of Ontario and New Brunswick,

but the French-Canadians do not occupy a historically privileged position in Western Canada. On the contrary, their contributions to the life and development of the West are seen as much smaller than those of the larger other ethnic groups, the Germans, the Ukrainians and the Scandinavians.

This statement should in no way be interpreted as representing anti-French sentiment in the west. The newspaper report goes on to say:

There is no apparent anti-French feeling. The other ethnic groups say they just don't want to be "left out".

They fear that constitutional entrenchment of French language rights will result in "greater discrimination against minority groups that has existed until now," according to R. L. Dzenick, president of the Edmonton branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee which comprises the vast majority of Ukrainians in Canada.

W. R. Zeidler, president of the German Canadian Association which speaks for most German-speaking groups in central Alberta, shares Mr. Dzenick's sentiment.

They fear the "second-class status" which still clings to many ethnic groups will be brought into sharper focus through the entrenchment of two official languages into the constitution.

"In the past we have found many instances where it has been difficult to obtain employment because of background", says Mr. Dzenick.

"There were many instances of discrimination. Now, with a second official language being forced upon us, and it doesn't matter which language it is, the minority groups will again feel the greatest pinch when it comes to discrimination.

Rightly or wrongly, these people express a sincere viewpoint. May I put on the record a paragraph or two from a publication known as the *Ukrainian Voice* of Winnipeg, dated May 7, 1969. In their editorial they ask for a more equitable language bill and say:

In spite of the many assurances from high places that the French language will not be forced upon any Canadian citizen, it can hardly be denied that the creation of French-English bilingual districts, on a 10 per cent basis, will prove to be an indirect form of compulsion insofar as the local positions are concerned.

This would be most unfair in districts which might have the minimum requirement of French population, but where some other ethnic group would be much larger numerically. If a situation of this sort were allowed to develop, we will be in fact creating a divisive society, a society in which some citizens would be more privileged than others. This would hardly be in keeping with the principles of a free society.

If the government is irrevocably wedded to the idea of bilingual districts, it should tread very carefully in instituting them. They should not necessarily follow the boundaries of federal or provincial electoral districts, but should be delineated in such a way as to encompass a majority of French-speaking citizens. Otherwise, to avoid the divisive effect, similar districts should be formed for other major language groups where