

National Centennial Act

contribution to confederation and its understanding of this problem. Now, if my hon. friend would go back to the days when Mr. St. Laurent was prime minister of Canada, he would recall that during a similar debate, the former prime minister had stated that the French language could be done away with, as an official language by a majority vote in the House of Commons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt once more the hon. member for St. Mary, but I suggest that he limits his remarks to the legislation now before us.

Mr. Valade: Mr. Speaker, I apologize, but I had to answer the hon. member for Lotbinière who made quite an irregular interruption, and if he wishes to start a debate on that matter, I am ready to take part in it.

I believe that the President of the Privy Council would have been well advised to keep political considerations out of the amendment he introduces to the legislation enacted by the former Conservative government.

To come back to the argument which I brought up a moment ago, I wish to tell him that I do not question the objectiveness and the honesty of those who will be appointed to that commission, but I believe that the risk which the government runs by proceeding in that manner can easily cast doubts on the honesty not only of the commission itself, but also of those who comprise it.

The commission will play a vital part in the success of Canada's centennial celebrations. That is why the minister should have taken all necessary precautions to ensure that nobody would have any misgivings about the commissioners' impartiality, and especially about political pressures or patronage within that commission.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I must say that as a French Canadian, I will be most happy to celebrate Canada's centennial with my English speaking fellow citizens. However, as the present premier of the province of Quebec said on several occasions, the future of confederation will be very doubtful indeed if the two groups who wrote the British North America Act do not make an objective effort to understand each other.

In fact, the decisions we take should work in favour of national unity instead of against it.

I should like to remind the house that the soundest basis of confederation was laid by Conservatives, men like Cartier and Macdonald. History is there to prove it. I have the feeling that it is the Conservative party which will once again save confederation, especially if certain Liberals who hold important positions, like the Quebec premier and his minister of natural resources, keep

on making vociferous statements in favour of nationalism and separatism. In my opinion, we will have then a basis for closer agreement between the two great races of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, nationalism and separatism are not to be found only in the province of Quebec.

There exists, in other parts of Canada, groups which manifest ideas of separatism in their own area.

In fact, it is recognized that hon. members often, and quite regrettably, receive periodicals which are not such as to consolidate the basis of understanding between French speaking and English speaking Canadians.

I have in hand one of those periodicals. I shall quote some extracts, simply in order to call the attention of responsible men, in all fields of public activity, on publications of that type, which, instead of helping us build a strong nation, endeavour to divide us by the wrong interpretation of the very principles which inspired the confederative pact. And, at this stage, I suggest it is a pact and not an act, as Mr. St. Laurent alleged.

Mr. Speaker, those periodicals are prejudicial to the country's unity. As a matter of fact, in its November 1963 issue, the *Sentinel* wrote:

[Text]

They are pleading now for an equality which, if granted, would soon develop into applied superiority through the pressure their unified control and persistent needling can exert upon the political leaders of all parties. That, to our mind, is the issue that lies ahead for Canada. It is in the shaping today, and all the calls seem to be coming from militant French Canadians in all stratas of Quebec life.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I point out that situation, which, I know, distresses all hon. members; but we are confronted here with precisely the type of publication that can only be prejudicial to the success of the celebration of the centennial.

The President of the Privy Council should have suppressed from these amendments the last appearance of patronage, so that this bill would not be a piece of legislation tainted with politics but a measure which might inspire truly noble feelings, unite all Canadians, and make of the year 1967, the year of Canada's centennial, a year of which we might all be proud as Canadians.

[Text]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the house ready for the question?

[Translation]

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, could I direct a question to the hon. member?