

CANADIAN COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM**LINGUISTIC RIGHTS—DEBATE ADJOURNED**

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Simard, calling the attention of the Senate to the need for the federal government to retain at least the linguistic component of Canada's Court Challenges Program.—(*Honourable Senator Molgat*).

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I may point out that this is the fifteenth day of debate on this issue. I would not like to see this inquiry dropped from the Order Paper. I will therefore say a few words at this point and perhaps someone else will move to adjourn the debate.

I think Senator Simard's proposal is of great importance to francophone communities across the country, with the exception, of course, of Quebec, but I am referring to those in the other provinces. In Manitoba, where francophone groups represent not more than 3 to 5 per cent of the population, according to the definition of who is considered a francophone, without this kind of assistance from the government we would not, in many cases, have been able to stand up for our rights.

If we want to maintain a bilingual system across this country, where small French-language minorities can continue to exist, they will need this support from the federal government.

I know that many others will say that the same applies to other cases where the Secretary of State has provided assistance, and I will not say they are wrong, but I do feel that

in this particular area, where language rights are concerned, it is absolutely essential for the government to reinstate this system.

I would ask my colleagues on all sides, especially those on the government side, to apply pressure to have this program restored; otherwise, we will very likely disappear. You already know that even with government help, where we have been able to campaign and go as far as the Supreme Court, we still have difficulties after the Supreme Court has ruled in favour of the French minority. The provinces, which are responsible for acting on these rulings, do not follow through. What do you think would happen if we did not have federal government assistance to take these issues to court?

Honourable senators, I ask you to do all you can to have this program restored for the French-language minorities throughout the country. Without it, in ten or twenty years it will be illusory to say we have a bilingual country where French-speaking minorities can continue to live in enclaves like mine in Manitoba, and with even greater difficulty in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. In New Brunswick, with a supportive provincial government, a great deal has been done.

I can assure you that, for us in the other provinces, things are not easy. It is not always due to bad will on the part of the provincial governments, which are subject to all kinds of financial and, of course, political pressures. Since francophones are usually a very small minority, it is very difficult for them to take the necessary action. It is therefore essential for the federal government to maintain this program.

On motion of Senator Corbin, debate adjourned.

The Senate adjourned until Wednesday, March 24, 1993 at 1:30 p.m.