

House of Commons

Mr. Speaker, this measure will extend considerably the official recognition of bilingualism in Canada. I have just heard the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm (Mr. Pigeon) make one of his typical statements to the effect that this is the most important legislation since confederation, a 100 per cent Duplessis phrase. I have no intention of following him in that vein.

Since all parties are agreed on the basic principle of simultaneous translation here, in this house, I would like to recall also, as was done by the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson), that Mr. Maurice Breton, distinguished predecessor of the hon. member who just resumed his seat, was the first to advocate the installation of a system such as this, in this house.

(Text):

I should like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, who started his speech in French this morning. May I express the opinion that the installation of this new facility will not prevent hon. members who speak English or hon. members who speak French from studying the use of the other official language which is not well known to them. We should use this system to improve our knowledge of both languages and not make it an excuse for our failure to learn the other official language of this country.

(Translation):

Following the hon. members who have spoken, I wish to thank the government for this beneficial piece of legislation.

I know, Mr. Speaker, the problems that face members who live in parts of Canada where only one language is spoken. For those who were born far from the province of Quebec and who, for many years, have heard only the English language, it is surely difficult to learn French. It is quite gratifying to see that many members of the House of Commons, are now taking courses in the French language. They are making considerable efforts to master that language. On the other hand, the same applies to Canadians born in the province of Quebec and living in communities where French Canadians are the majority, since they must make great efforts if they want to learn the English language.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of this motion. We will all support it in the hope that it will foster national unity in Canada.

Mr. Robert Lafreniere (Quebec-Montmorency): Mr. Speaker, as the representative of the constituency of Quebec-Montmorency in the House of Commons, I have particular

reasons for congratulating the government for the concrete step it is taking with regard to the French and English languages, by setting up here a simultaneous translation system. The right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) was right in reminding us a moment ago that the British North America Act recognizes both French and English as the two official languages of this country.

The Prime Minister also recalled that, in past years, several members of the house had requested the setting up of a simultaneous translation system. I am happy to note, Mr. Speaker, that this project is now taking shape under the guidance of the present government and that the motion for the setting up of this system of a simultaneous translation has been introduced by the right hon. Prime Minister, who is from Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that so excellent a proposal is being put through.

I wish my hon. friend, the member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier), were in the house this morning, for I mean to reply to a question he put to me during one of his speeches, expressing surprise at the fact that, in moving the address in reply to the speech from the throne, I had described the Prime Minister as the saviour of confederation. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to point out to hon. members that the present right hon. Prime Minister is not merely a man of words, but of deeds when it comes to giving practical effect to the spirit of confederation.

Mr. D. J. Walker (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I am indeed delighted that the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) has decided to propose the setting up of a simultaneous translation system in this house. What a fine, splendid, achievement! We are most gratified at the proposal, Mr. Speaker. However, it is regrettable that in this way we might lose the desire and incentive to learn the beautiful French language. It is unfortunate because in being free to listen to either of two languages at the same time, there is no longer any incentive to learn the language other than our own.

However, Mr. Speaker, both great races in Canada have much in common especially a shared feeling of being part of the same team in the service of the same Queen, humbly working for the same ends.

Mr. Prime Minister, I thank you and congratulate you.

Mr. Gerard Loiselle (St. Ann): Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in saying a few words this morning on the motion put forward by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr.