

Jean-Guy Savard and Richard Vigneault (eds.), Multilingual Political Systems: Problems and Solutions. Publication A-9 of the International Center for Research on Bilingualism. Quebec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval; 1975.

The 20 contributions in this volume are the edited version of a conference held at Laval University in 1972. The contributors are drawn mainly from the fields of sociology and political science, but they all have a long-standing interest in language and language policy and the volume thus becomes of interest to linguists. The editors have divided the book into two parts: Part I addressing itself to general problems, Part II dealing with case studies. Almost all the papers are relevant to Papua New Guinea and I will comment below on a few points that seem to me to be especially pertinent in the Papua New Guinea situation.

Deutsch, in his opening paper on the political significance of linguistic conflicts, issues the warning that often "the most expensive thing that can be done about linguistic conflicts is to try to ignore them. Language is an automatic signaling system, second only to race, in identifying targets for possible privilege or discrimination" (p.7). This warning should be read in conjunction with Simon's assertion later in the book that language "differences become a source of conflict only when literacy . . . . . affects the access of large numbers of people to careers that provide them with a livelihood, positions of authority, and status" (89). Simon goes on to assert that those "affected by language policies . . . . . are apt to be politically effective out of proportion to their numbers because they are articulate and aware of their interests" (89). There is no doubt that Papua New Guinea is already suffering from this malaise.

Simon's article on occupational structure, multilingualism and social change makes grim reading indeed for anyone familiar with Papua New Guinea. He points to the phenomenon in a situation of social and geographic mobility of ambitious parents no longer teaching their children the parental language so as to make social and economic

advancement easier for the children and how this on the one hand results in "the opening up of opportunities to advance from menial and manual labor to clerical, professional, and managerial occupations" and on the other "may actually create and exacerbate conflicts over language policies in the contest for access to economic values, political authority and prestige" (99).

Simon warns of the extensive latency of language conflicts. He points out that this is due to the

far-reaching social changes that precede them. These necessitate the allocation of scarce material and human resources, the coordination of diverse activities, the planning for the future, and efforts to anticipate consequences of decisions and their frequently inchoate implications. As a consequence, all energies are focused upon improvising, solidifying and expanding the needed educational, managerial, judiciary, and governmental institutions while no attention is paid to language problems that evolve unobserved in the shadows of these institutions (99f.).

Papua New Guinea fits this description perfectly. Language problems are either not recognized, ignored, or given only perfunctory attention, while the government's main effort is concentrated on development, this being very often understood to mean economic development alone. The Central Planning Office has abrogated its responsibility in regard to language planning and left the field to the Education Department, thus leaving the vast majority of the people who have not had or do not have access to formal education out in the cold. This is bound to have consequences and expensive ones if we are to believe Deutsch.

The fact that a government pays attention to language problems does not mean, however, that it should achieve full equality between all of them. There are very practical limitations to such a goal, as Kloss in his paper on democracy and the

multinational state points out. He notes that such "full equality is possible only where no more than three major speech communities have to be taken account" (31), the largest one not comprising more than 60% of the population, the second one no less than 20%, and that, given legal co-equality, the two (or three) languages will never be quite equal functionally. His third point is "that the full equality of the ethnic groups seems feasible but perhaps only by means which are not easily reconcilable with our traditional concept of democracy" (37).

Lieberson and O'Connor "describe some of the basic features in the linkages between a multilingual nation and its political diversions" (177). They are interested in the processes by which multilingual nations are either maintained or dissolved. Their model might show useful results if applied on a regional level in Papua New Guinea.

Friedrich's paper on the politics of language and corporate federalism describes some of the legal and political solutions arrived at in order to accommodate linguistic and/or ethnic minorities in a multinational state. He concentrates his account on attempts in the Hapsburg Empire and later in Lithuania to make several constituencies not territorial, but corporate and voluntary. The Lithuanian experiment especially seems worth studying as it appears to have functioned admirably, and Papua New Guinea's constitutional advisors might have profited from studying it; (unfortunately, when the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic states the experiment in corporate federalism came to an abrupt end).

The final paper by Watts on Asian multicultural federations is rich in examples, insights and suggestions. It stresses many of the practical problems within their boundaries - there is no case of a government voluntarily concerning itself with language problems - and it describes many of the solutions and attempted solutions. Two problems which especially confront these governments are that firstly, "the effort to represent different cultural groups proportionately in the central civil service may conflict with the principle that appointment should be based on merit" (583f.) and secondly, "in a single public

service composed of different linguistic groups the need for internal communication to be carried out in several languages has complicated administrative problems and added to the cost of such services" (584). The first problem is a very real one in Papua New Guinea, the second one exists, but in disguise: Official government business is carried out in English of which a substantial number of civil servants have only an incomplete command. The second problem is alleviated on a practical level by the fact that Papua New Guinea's public servants use either Tok Pisin or Hiri Motu when talking to each other, but while most Hiri Motu-speaking public servants have a smattering of Tok Pisin, most Tok Pisin speakers do not know Hiri Motu.

A Papua New Guinean weighted down with the demands the use of English imposes on his linguistic abilities will find some relief in reading Mazrui's delightful chapter on Afro-Saxon. This chapter provides the only light relief in an otherwise seemingly unending saga of difficulties, problems, failed solutions, and suppressed or ignored minorities.

Laponce and Dion in their preface to the volume note that "none of the papers takes as its main theme the comparative study of legislation and regulation of language teaching and language use in multilingual societies." The reader in Papua New Guinea will miss such a chapter sorely, (a) in order to compare what has been done here with what has been done elsewhere, and (b) in order to seek guidance as to what can be done here. This should not detract from the value of the book as a whole, however, and the International Center for Research on Bilingualism is to be commended for organizing the conference and arranging for the publication of its proceedings.

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