

*Supply*

as those of the critic for multiculturalism. I want to interrelate these various aspects in appreciating the place that bilingualism has in our country in order to indicate why we are concerned to have the Bill come forward, as my colleague, the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis), has already indicated.

If we cast our minds back some 20 years and more in Canadian affairs we will remember that there was a very great struggle in the political life of the country, and in the politics of the Province of Quebec even more particularly, a struggle in politics, in society and in culture. It was a struggle between an English-speaking Canada expressed in so many ways, and encouraged as it had been from the late 1940s through the 1950s by the federal Government, a struggle against the assertion that Canada was simply an English-speaking country.

We can look back to various attempts to recognize what has often been called simply the French fact in Canada. We know that before the 1960s, as well as afterwards for that matter, it was always a struggle against a powerful reality, the nationalism of all of those who saw Canada as simply English-speaking and wanted to remove the diversity that existed.

The fact that the federal Government in the 1950s had become so active in cultural activity is a fact that is all too rarely remembered these days. That is surely the context into which we can place the Constitutional Accord of 1987. Looking back some 30 years to the work of the Tremblay Commission in Quebec we might remember the assertion of a primary responsibility in Quebec for cultural and social policy and the maintenance of a French-speaking community in the Province of Quebec, regardless of what might happen beyond its borders. Of course, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier as a Franco-Ontarian knows how much more difficult it has been outside the Province of Quebec to maintain the life of Franco-Ontarians.

● (1240)

In the 1960s the assertions in the Province of Quebec blew up quite clearly. I need only allude to that for all of us to appreciate that there was an enormous crisis. A Royal Commission that was appointed called this "the greatest crisis the Canadian nation had ever faced". When the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism recommended that the Canadian nation must become officially bilingual, that was a federal political response to this particular challenge to the Canadian nation.

Of course, it found expression in 1969 in the Official Languages Act which established principles of service to the public and employment opportunities for both language groups in Canada. In 1969 that achievement was only one of the very significant events that occurred about 1970 in the recognition of diversity as the reality of this country rather than simply an English-speaking country with a French fact that could not be successfully swamped.

I point out that even before it had completed its work, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism had to recognize that one could not define the country as bicultural, even if one were going to establish English and French as the official languages. In 1971 the statement of a multicultural policy for Canada within a bilingual framework was an inevitable outgrowth of this turning away from an Anglo Canada to a Canada of diversity.

I would assert that during that same period when the newly formed Trudeau Government issued a White Paper on Indian Affairs which anticipated the destruction of aboriginal communities in Canada and the disappearance of native Canadians into the mainstream Canadian society only with rights that other Canadians have, that Government found itself under criticism and attack. It abandoned the policy and the aboriginal peoples found themselves gearing up to a higher level of political activity and eventually of legal work, judicial struggle and constitutional activity in the 1980s, a struggle against great difficulties and enormous barriers.

All of us who were critical of aspects of the Constitutional Accord of 1987 last summer and fall recognized that while it did justice to the demands of Quebec and the realities that official bilingualism deals with, it neglected those of the aboriginal peoples and the multicultural realities of the country. In that sense it was an incomplete accord as far as dealing with all of the shortcomings in Canadian national political life.

Sketching those aspects of Canadian diversities within which the Official Languages Act has a fundamental place, and recognizing that official bilingualism was the first victory won in this country for the diversity that we now celebrate in multiculturalism is to appreciate how important that Bill is. To recognize the need to consolidate, re-enact, and improve the language legislation of the country is a very important matter. Bill C-72 deserves the type of concern expressed by this motion and our desire that the policy be advanced. It is obvious that the work of ensuring that the federal Government operates on the basis of the Official Languages Act always involves a struggle.

I am sure that the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier would be frank in saying that he struggled with Government, with departments, and with the institutional inertia that is so characteristic of Departments of Government and of the institutions of the country. He struggled with those just as much in the days of the successive Trudeau Governments as he has been doing now with the Conservatives pulling the reins of power in this country. Institutional inertia is the brutal fact.

It is always a struggle to advance the principle of service to the public in the language of choice across the country, to ensure that members of the official language minority have the opportunity to work in their own language wherever they are in the country, to achieve fair representation and equitable participation in the Public Service of Canada, and perhaps in