

Official Languages

by which merit is to be judged, that is general proficiency, the intellectual formation and education, knowledge of the language of the community, and the other factors mentioned in that section which are deemed to be relevant.

The hon. member for Crowfoot, in proposing this amendment, has two objectives in mind I am sure. First, he wants to ensure as far as possible that any public servant is not subjected unnecessarily to the selection standards which would be a barrier to the development of his own personal career, either in his opportunities to achieve recruitment—

Mr. Horner: Not my own personal career.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): He was speaking on behalf of his party. As I said, either by way of recruitment to the public service or, once having obtained admission to the service of Canada, in his promotional opportunities.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Second, I believe the amendment seeks to ensure as far as possible that entry into the public service is not unnecessarily barred to one who through no fault of his own has found himself unable to acquire appropriate skill in the second language. To this end, the hon. member has suggested—and I use the words of his amendment—that willingness to learn the other language should be a sufficient qualification. In this connection, we have reviewed the possibility of exploiting language training resources in such a way as to meet the objectives of the hon. member without prejudice to the principles which have been established in the management of the Public Service of Canada over the past 30 years.

I might suggest to hon. members that we in this house are obliged to consider two aspects of the administrative problem. First, I have been informed by the Public Service Commission that 75 per cent of the men and women who work for the people of Canada as employees in the public service never leave the town or locality in which they are recruited. The likelihood of new language requirements from persons recruited in unilingual localities is therefore remote. I have in mind areas such as those represented by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) or by several hon. members from the Province of Quebec—Rimouski and Chicoutimi, for instance. Thus, if the amendment is designed to protect the person who has never had an opportunity

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

to learn the second language, it would really have only a limited application. Second, if one places the extensive language training facilities available, presently 5,000 places—the number is soon to be increased to 7,000 and ultimately to 9,000—against the potential demand—and the global figure today is 370,000 public servants, excluding members of the Armed Forces—

Mr. Horner: The hon. gentleman is not including the Crown corporations.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I am including them, but not the employees of the C.N.R. As I was saying, if one places the facilities available against the potential demand it is easily seen that while the requirements for language training might, in the ordinary course of things, be easily met, periods could arise in which this would not be possible because of an unusually high demand. We feel, therefore, that it would not be appropriate to tie the public service into a legislative straitjacket in connection with language training which might well frustrate its development in certain unusual circumstances.

Mr. Horner: Would the hon. gentleman permit a question?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The hon. member for Crowfoot knows me well. I am at his disposition, but I wonder whether he will allow me to finish my exposé. His memory is very good at this time of the evening and I am sure he will be able to return to the question later when I have finished what I have to say.

Mr. Horner: My memory is good at any time of the day.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Further, it is estimated that of the total of 370,000 mentioned, barely one sixth, or 50,000, will need any bilingual capability, and of that number one-half, or 25,000, are already bilingual. This is the size of the problem we have to deal with. The question I put to the hon. member for Crowfoot and to the house in general is: In these circumstances should we tie ourselves to the rigid concept of a statutory requirement such as the amendment envisages?

The position of the government in relation to the proposed amendment must now be obvious to members of the house. There are, however, one or two smaller points which perhaps should be made with regard to the administration of such a proposal. For