

Official Languages

Act in the Public Service of Canada. I would quote a phrase or two referring to this resolution and its status among other matters facing this House. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said:

• (1450)

The throne speech has proposed measures to improve urban life, and to widen opportunities for western Canadians; to deal with many economic and regional expansion problems; and with what some call "the language problem". They are all on our agenda for this session; we will deal with them all with equal vigour.

In a later passage, making more or less the same point the Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, language policy is not an *idée fixe* with this government; it is one of the means toward our two pre-eminent goals, national unity, and equality of opportunity.

Here, I stress the Prime Minister's words:

... it is one of the means toward our two pre-eminent goals, national unity, and equality of opportunity.

"one of the means", Mr. Speaker. A few years ago the intimation might have been different. It might have been that it was the primordial means, and not only the primordial means, but a sufficient means toward the goal of national unity. I continue to quote from the Prime Minister's address:

To a Quebecker a more desirable Canada may vitally depend on respect for language rights. To a westerner more interest may currently attach to whether this government and their own provincial premiers make real progress at the Western Economic Opportunities Conference. In many parts of the country millions of Canadians will judge their government less by the language it speaks than by whether it provides equity and compassion in our social welfare system, or new ideas and resources to help keep urban life liveable and urban government workable.

Can all these needs be understood and tackled together, Mr. Speaker? I think they can—

That is the end of the citation from the Prime Minister's address. I have gone over these two passages very carefully because to me they signal an important change in attitude and outlook. I will not venture to say a change of mind or change of idea, but a change of attitude which allows the Prime Minister and his government to place the Official Languages Act and its application in its proper context.

Let me continue on this matter of distinctions. It is now realized that we are not to equate the Official Languages Act and its provisions and its carrying out, with bilingualism in this country; they are not the same thing. Nor should we equate the Official Languages Act and its provisions with the establishment, maintenance and preservation of national unity in this country; they are not the same thing. To use a classical, logical distinction, Mr. Speaker, which I think is very important in this case, I believe we could say that the proper application, the generous application of the Official Languages Act and its provisions ensures a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition, for the maintenance of national unity.

This distinction is an extremely important one because in the past many Canadians both inside this House and outside this House have heard remarks to the effect that the application of the Official Languages Act, essentially the *sine qua non* for national unity, is the approach which would establish and develop national unity. There was

[Mr. Harney.]

always a suggested corollary to this kind of statement, and it was that any criticisms of the Official Languages Act and its application was tantamount to disloyalty—not disloyalty to a party or disloyalty to a government but disloyalty to an idea, the idea of Canada. We have come a long way, Mr. Speaker, since those days of 1968, a very long way because now, as members of this House, we can feel that we can stand up and criticize the specific application of the Official Languages Act, criticize the progress or lack of progress of bilingualism and language opportunity in the civil service, criticize the very proposals put forward by the government this day without feeling we are in any way disloyal. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that is a very large measure of progress.

I feel that is important for myself, among many others, because in many ways I am not satisfied with the state of affairs in the public service, with the state of bilingualism in Canada, with the Official Languages Act or with its application. Later in my remarks I propose to make some very specific comments to that end. Let me repeat that I, as a Canadian, appreciate the fact that I can finally stand up and state my case without there being any intimation whatsoever that I am somehow being disloyal because I do not agree with an act proposed by a specific government at a specific time in the history of my nation.

Basically, my feeling about the Official Languages Act, Mr. Speaker, a feeling which is shared by many of my party and many people out in the country, is that this act is the least we can do with respect to the bilingual nature of our country. If we did less we would lapse into insensitivity and niggardliness. There may be defects in the act, and there may be defects in the application of the act, but at the very least it provides us with an earnest of our intention and this intention is to bring about language equality in the public service. Note, Mr. Speaker, I do not say equality of opportunity for language equality in the public service because I certainly distinguish my position and that of my party. I hope, from that of the Prime Minister on that point. The Prime Minister is after all, and he has not been hiding the fact these last several years, a liberal. I use that word with the small "l", Mr. Speaker; he is even a big "L" Liberal but I am now talking about the fact that he is a small "l" liberal and, therefore, it should not be surprising to any of us that he should speak as a liberal.

I come back to the phrase I repeated a short time ago—"our two pre-eminent goals, national unity and equality of opportunity". These are not my goals, Mr. Speaker. My goals would ring a little more like those of national unity or, preferably, national solidarity but I will not quibble over those two words today—national unity and equality of condition. The words "equality of opportunity" make the Prime Minister a liberal and the words "equality of condition" make me a socialist. That is fine; we understand the distinction. It is clear. I appreciate, of course, the Liberal position. I think I even understand it. As a matter of fact, I understand it so well that I understand its internal contradictions. I remember that a few years ago, in 1968, there was a contest for the leadership of the Liberal party. The person who is now Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) was one of the candidates. He epitomized the Liberal position in his address to the convention when he said, "We Liberals do not believe that everybody should