

Financial Administration Act

I do not see why anyone should oppose this legislation, which would merely do justice to a racial element representing one third of the population of this country, especially one whose ancestors were the very ones who opened Canada to civilization, were its first settlers and who valiantly fought for its defence. After the conquest, they displayed the same enthusiasm, the same courage and the same loyalty toward the country's new rulers as they had shown in their attempt to defend it against them. Those who today live in this beautiful country, whatever their racial origin, are indebted to the French Canadian element for the advantage of being at home here in Canada, and for having escaped absorption by the great republic to the south.

In sessional paper No. 225, dated June 15, 1955, tabled in answer to a question I had put on the order paper, I was told that the St. Lawrence seaway authority issues bilingual cheques all over Canada. With a few exceptions, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation does the same thing.

I compare those two cases with those of bilingual postage stamps and money, and I ask the following question: has any Canadian suffered from that new situation? Has he been deprived of any of his rights or privileges due to the fact that the two official languages appear simultaneously on the bills of exchange I have just mentioned?

If an hon. member could rise in this house and describe a single case of this type, I would be prepared to withdraw my bill at once.

Far from this being the case, Mr. Speaker, many of the most cultured, learned and prominent people, of whatever racial origin, point out everywhere, in Canada and abroad, the advantages of cultural and racial duality. Now then, the basic vehicle of any culture, and the primary characteristic of any race, is first and foremost the language, spoken and written. Why then should written language in Canada be denied all possible chances of demonstrating to the world at large the reality of this highly praised duality?

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help quoting briefly from an article which appeared on June 17, 1955 in *Le Soleil* of Quebec city under the signature of Gerard Morin. I quote:

It seems inconceivable that, in the twentieth century, one should still have to fight in Canada for a matter as simple as bilingual wording on cheques issued by the federal government.

I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that this government, being well disposed, will not

miss this opportunity to remedy a situation which even its friends consider inconceivable.

(Text):

Hon. W. E. Harris (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as a preliminary point of order, I should like to point out that the bill, while not providing on the face of it for the expenditure of public money, would undoubtedly lead to that result. Whether or not Your Honour has considered that point in this connection, I do not know, but the fact remains that if the bill did become law it would cost us additional money to print on the cheques the other language concerned. I make that point of order for Your Honour's consideration for the moment, and I should like you to consider it before I proceed with what I have to say.

Mr. Speaker: There is no question that the initiative of the Crown in matters of public expenditure must be preserved at all times. As a matter of fact, if the bill were to pass without that point having been raised by the Minister of Finance and it was discovered later that the bill should have been preceded by a resolution, the proceedings on the bill would be null and void. I confess I have not looked at the point. It did not occur to me in any way whatever that there might be some expenditure of public money involved if the bill were to pass. The Minister of Finance, who must know much more than I do about what the consequences might be with respect to the passage of this bill, has said that it would cost additional money, and even if it is very little I would think there is a great deal in what he says. But it seems to me that there have been other bills about which it could have been said that an expenditure of money was involved. I do not want to decide on that basis when, in order to do so, I feel that I am obliged to look at the matter through a magnifying glass.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might say a word on the point of order. I think it is an important point. It relates not exclusively to my hon. friend's bill but to other bills that other private members might seek to introduce. I would ask Your Honour, when you are studying the matter, to consider the headnotes on pages 457 and 459 of Beauchesne's third edition. Both of those are headnotes to rulings by Mr. Speaker Sproule. The one on page 457 reads as follows:

A bill, which does not involve a direct expenditure but merely confers upon the government a power for the exercise of which public money will have to be voted by parliament, is not a money bill and no resolution is necessary as a condition precedent to its introduction.