

Grievance

tion in the public service. I earnestly hope that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) will consider this situation and consult the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) about it, with a view to seeing that persons casually employed by the public service will not be denied the right to employment in the public service of their own country. I am concerned about that aspect.

● (2150)

Let me repeat my request. I ask the President of the Treasury Board to consult with his colleagues to see whether this inequity—potential for some and real for others—cannot be corrected. Surely, the inequitable order could be revoked as easily as it was put through in the first place. Surely, we can help those who wish to work for the public service of this country in that way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre De Bané (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs): On the same subject, Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member who spoke before me should explain that the French-speaking community still has the main grievances. Indeed, when one looks at positions in the federal public service, one realizes that the great majority have been classified as English unilingual, and in a far greater proportion than that of the anglophone population, and conversely, when it comes to Francophones who represent more than or almost 30 per cent of the Canadian population, the percentage of positions in the public service that have been designated as French unilingual is not 30 per cent.

I would also like to remind the hon. member that according to the statistics submitted by the Public Service Commission for a number of years, Francophones are underrepresented in the federal public service, at all levels, in all departments and at every level in every department. And when the hon. member talks about discrimination, I would like to remind him that today the working language in most departments, agencies and institutions of the federal government is still English and English exclusively, and if there is a group against which the current policy of the government discriminates, it is Francophones. I quite agree with the hon. member that one must not look to the past.

[*English*]

We should not look to the past; we should look to the future. I was happy to hear the hon. member agree to the principle on which the policy is based. It is encouraging to note that most members of this House support the policy. It can be expressed in another way. It is a policy for national unity. For me, bilingualism is one means of achieving and strengthening national unity; it is a means of making sure that all Canadians feel at home in Canada, that they all feel the central government represents them, that the whole country is theirs, and that they need not retreat to one province.

We should examine the program from all aspects. Usually, after people have been hired for temporary employment in the public service, they end up obtaining permanent jobs in the public service. When they enter the competition, the knowledge and experience they gained on the job while working temporarily stands them in good stead; so the odds of their getting the job are high.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

[*Translation*]

I think, Madam Speaker, that in the main the implementation of that policy may cause problems but in my opinion we must admit that altogether it is the French-speaking community which is mainly entitled to complain. As a matter of fact, the report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism as well as the annual reports of the Commissioner of Official Languages, who incidentally is doing a marvellous job, show abundantly that it is indeed against the French-speaking community that the current policy discriminates.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, the hon. member raised a point which is of concern in the national capital region. I believe it relates to term and temporary employees in supervisory positions. Those who are appointed to term or temporary supervisory positions are, according to a recent Treasury Board interpretation, required to be bilingual. The employees of whom the hon. member spoke, supervisory employees of the Department of National Revenue who have been, in many cases, called back year after year in a temporary supervisory capacity to do work connected with the preparation of income tax returns, constitute a special case. This matter was brought to the attention of the minister and Treasury Board. As the hon. member who raised the grievance pointed out, an order was issued to exclude those temporary employees from the operation of the policy. I have taken this matter up with the President of the Treasury Board and other public officials and there is a review taking place in the national capital region involving other employees who are in similar positions.

One of the inequities of the situation I suggest is this: those employees are not given priority for language training. They will not be accepted for language training although in many cases they have come back every year for the past 15 or 20 years to do the same kind of work. They have taken a temporary appointment which does not last the whole year and does not lead to permanent employment in the department. Because there is a lack of facilities for language training in the language school and because these employees constitute a special case, Treasury Board is currently reviewing the matter. I am sure the hon. member will wait, as will others representing the national capital region, for modifications in policy and developments which will deal with this special situation.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.