

Adjournment Debate

Before any Member opposite begins to think that mine is a partisan speech, I wish to say that I condemn my own Party, too, for its failure to act on the question of health promotion through the prevention of smoking. I condemn a Party that appoints a self-confessed, acknowledged smoker as its health critic. I have to say that I condemn, too, the provincial wing of my Party which prevented the discussion of an anti-smoking resolution at the recent provincial convention. If, after that, any Member cares to interpret my remarks as being partisan, let the Member do so.

• (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[Translation]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 66 deemed to have been moved.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE—ENQUIRY WHETHER AGREEMENT EXISTS TO REDUCE NUMBER OF FRANCOPHONE EMPLOYEES—REQUEST FOR EXPLANATIONS CONCERNING LETTER

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I intend to speak again on the subject of official languages. To me it is an important subject, and it seems to be important to the Government. In fact, the Government included a number of promises concerning official languages in the last two Speeches from the Throne.

The Minister has assured me in the House that his Government had no intention of relaxing its efforts to strengthen the francophone presence in the Canadian public service. The Minister's statement would seem to be consistent with the policies announced by the Conservative Government in the last two Speeches from the Throne. However, the real situation is not at all consistent with these objectives. Indeed, the Commissioner of Official Languages said as much in his annual report. He expressed his concern about the position of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on official languages. As we know, the RCMP has announced that it intends to reduce the percentage of Francophones within the force from 20 per cent to 14 per cent. Even worse, it intends to change the classifications of bilingual positions, and I will get back to this later on. Once again, we see that the Conservative Government promises one thing and does the exact opposite.

Meanwhile, there are new developments, life goes on and the Government has once again failed to act responsibly, as I said before, because up to now it has consistently failed to take a clear and unequivocal position on reinforcing policy on official languages programs. This means that managers just have to do the best they can with the few resources they have, because the people in charge, the Government, are shirking their responsibilities.

The effects of this lack of Government leadership are disastrous. No coordinated efforts can be made, and in some cases, we are unfortunately seeing a reduction in services to Francophones. That is already the case with the RCMP, which

has announced it will reduce the number of francophone constables in the force from 20 to 14 per cent. The Minister however, in one of his answers to me in the House, stated that this was just something being discussed by a few officials and that no decision had been made.

I have referred to a document of the highest level between the RCMP commissioner and the Treasury Board officials then responsible for implementing the official languages policy, and this document clearly states that there has been an agreement in principle. The Minister rejected this offhandedly by saying that no agreement had been made, that these were only discussions between officials and that he himself had agreed to nothing. This truly shows that the lack of action of the Minister has had negative results. If the Minister is right in saying that no relaxing of the policy will be tolerated, he is nevertheless guilty of letting his officials waste some precious time by negotiating among themselves to conclude unworkable agreements.

Mr. Speaker, if the agreement in principle is implemented as anticipated in the documents which we have obtained, the Minister will have to apologize for having misled the House. Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what is happening now in my opinion. After the Minister stated several times in this House that he would not tolerate any reductions from the levels provided in the official languages policy, we are seeing movements everywhere to reduce these levels. An editorial in the newspaper *Le Droit* of November 18 said, and I am not the one to say so, that the French language has lost a lot of ground in the RCMP since a Conservative Government has been in power in Ottawa. Not only have hiring standards been changed, but the whole bilingual staffing sector will be turned upside down. All this is confirmed by an internal document of the RCMP of which I have a copy. After reading this document, the *Le Droit* reporter noted that the obvious objective of the management of our federal police force is to require a sufficient knowledge of both official languages of Canada only on rare occasions, so rare in fact that the Commissioner has just conferred upon himself the exclusive power to approve "the unit bilingual complements with Level C profiles".

The Commissioner feels that the B level profile would be enough for the RCMP. I do not agree, Mr. Speaker, and although the RCMP is to be blamed, final responsibility for those unfortunate decisions rests with the Minister himself, and the Treasury Board among others. Since the Tories came to power, they have allowed the situation to deteriorate by doing nothing, showing no leadership. The Minister in charge, the President of the Treasury Board, has stated in this House that he would not back out of his objective to strengthen the French-speaking presence. But apart from his rhetoric, he has done nothing, Mr. Speaker. The Minister and the Government are responsible for that situation. They have failed to show any leadership. Nothing is being done, and when nothing is being done there is no progress. This is why I feel the Minister or the Parliamentary Secretary should tell me why this Government does not act, take concrete steps, translate its rhetoric into actions.