

*Official Languages*

this motion will indicate to all Canadians that all sincere people in Canada want Canadian unity, that is full bilingualism in Canada. After this vote, Mr. Speaker, there will be some twenty opponents, but I think that by pitching into them the idea that they also must become Canadians, and stop being unilingual, we will make them understand that the salvation of Canada rests upon bilingualism.

If the question is finally put tonight with respect to this motion, I think the Canadian people will realize that government members are determined to recognize once and for all the bilingual nature of Canada, not only in theory, but also in practice.

● (8:10 p.m.)

[English]

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, we listened with great care to the speech made by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) this afternoon just before we rose for the adjournment at six o'clock. I gave careful and sympathetic consideration to the amendment which he proposes. Before dealing with it in specific terms, I think it is perhaps necessary to give the house some background material in order that members may understand fully the significance of the proposal made by the hon. member for Crowfoot in the light of the impact which it would have on the long standing traditional practices in the public service of Canada.

In the early 1930's, parliament amended the Civil Service Act of 1918 in such a way as to direct the Civil Service Commission to ensure, in making an appointment to a local office—that is to say a position not in the headquarters establishment—that the candidate to be appointed be proficient in English or French, whichever of these languages was used by the majority of the members of the community in which he was to be posted and which the local office served. Thus was established the principle that a prerequisite to appointment was a sufficient knowledge of either his first or his second language to enable the public servant to provide services to members of the community in the language used by the majority of those members.

I am told by the chairman of the Public Service Commission that the records of the commission show that in the 1930's it required on an administrative basis, certain linguistic skills to serve the minority linguistic group throughout the period preceding

and succeeding the amendment to the Civil Service Act of 1918 to which I just referred. In 1961, when the legislation governing appointments and promotions in the public service was under review by the parliament of the day under the administration of the then prime minister, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), parliament decided, and in my view quite rightly, both to extend the principle to which I just referred and at the same time to provide in the statutes an explicit direction to the Civil Service Commission to the effect that in making appointments or in promoting prospective candidates care should be given to ensuring that the candidates be sufficiently proficient in English or French or both so that service to the public may be effective.

Again in 1967 when parliament endorsed the Public Service Employment Act, this extension of the basic principle to which I just referred was incorporated in section 20 of the act. I should like to read the section. It is part of the law of Canada. It reads:

Employees appointed to serve in any department or other portion of the Public Service, or part thereof, shall be qualified in the knowledge and use of the English or French language or both, to the extent that the Commission deems necessary in order that the functions of such department, portion or part can be performed adequately and effective service can be provided to the public.

I believe this is a brief review of the history of the practice and traditions of the public service of this country for the past 30 years or more. To an increasing degree, as is evident in the policies of succeeding governments representing both the party to which I belong and the party of the official opposition, we have recognized the need to insist, in cases where in fact there is a need, that the possession of the appropriate linguistic skills, either by way of a first or second language, must be an element in the administration of the principle of merit. This proposition was made explicit by the then prime minister, Mr. Pearson, in his statement to this house on April 6, 1966, when he said the following:

The achievement of bilingualism is in itself a desirable objective for any Canadian citizen. Where the need for bilingualism clearly exists in practice, above all in the National Capital, it should be recognized as an element of merit in selection for civil service positions.

As the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid) said this afternoon in referring to section 12 in the assessment of merit, although it may not be a direct definition certainly it sets the guidelines or standards