

attached to each of these two functions.

Whichever of the two services is involved, the work is done in private and the results, by law, are communicated to the complainant and the institutions concerned. It should be noted that the Commissioner's powers can only be brought to bear in matters of federal jurisdiction. The Commissioner is an officer of Parliament, appointed by that body to a seven-year term; he is eligible to be reappointed for further terms not exceeding seven years. The Commissioner is independent of the Government and is required to submit an annual report to Parliament on the conduct of his office during the preceding year and may make recommendations for changes in the Official Languages Act as he deems necessary or desirable.

All of the preceding is the serious way of describing what's happening on Canada's bilingualism front these days. But there's more to it than that. Some idea of what more is conveyed in the following story, reprinted with permission from the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, by Ottawa columnist Geoffrey Stevens.

## Bilingualism Spicer style

Or as his heading put it - this is "bilingualism - Spicer style" (Mr. Keith Spicer being the Commissioner of Official Languages already referred to).

The trouble with bilingualism is that it's such a deadly serious business. Parliament certainly viewed it seriously in 1969 when it enacted the Official Languages Act. It remains a serious business to the Treasury Board (which must implement the policy), to most unilingual English-speaking civil servants and to thousands upon thousands of English Canadians outside the public service who still believe that the Government is trying the ram French down their throats.

The only happy face in this vale of furrowed brows and clenched teeth belongs to Keith Spicer, the Commissioner of Official Languages. Mr. Spicer, you see, is a heretic. He believes that bilingualism can be and should be fun. He's the man who once said (and still believes) that the best way to learn French is in bed. And while he certainly considers a functionally bilingual public service to be a serious objective, he sees no reason why the process of getting there cannot be made enjoyable.

Needless to say, Mr. Spicer's approach is not universally admired. His crack about \*"Westmount Rhodesians" still rankles. In the opinion of many bureaucrats and politicians, he is inclined to be altogether too flippant about a subject which intimately

affects their jobs and political futures. But, like it or not, the federal service is about to get another dose of bilingualism Spicer-style.

The Commissioner and his staff have prepared what they call a "Safari Kit". It's a flat cardboard box done up to look like a knapsack. Inside are two booklets designed to help civil servants to hack their way through the bilingualism jungle. Forty thousand copies of the kit will be distributed among the 400,000 people who work for the federal Government and its various appendages.

The two booklets present factual information and frank advice on bilingualism in a good-humoured way. One, entitled *Twenty Questions: And A Few More, On Canada's Official Languages*, gives Mr. Spicer's candid answers to the questions he is most often asked.

## New jungle book

The other booklet - *The Jungle Book on Official Languages* - is patterned along the lines of a sex manual and is illustrated with cartoons by *The Globe and Mail's* Ed Franklin depicting the adventures of an Anglophone explorer as he encounters a Francophone Jane.

It defines the responsibilities of each of the seven main bureaucracies involved in the bilingualism programme. It asks this provocative question - "The Adam and Eve Syndrome: Who is Covered (by the Official Languages Act)?" - and gives an easy-to-grasp answer - "as a rule of thumb . . . if it's federal, it's bilingual".

The *Jungle Book* explains the simple, but widely misunderstood, aim of the *Languages Act*: to compel the federal Government to make its services available to all citizens in the official language of their choice.

The booklet urges civil servants to make sure that services are "actively offered" in both languages - not grudgingly given. It provides a few tips for unilingual officials suddenly confronted by a citizen seeking service in the other language: "Seek out a person able to speak the desired language . . . A smiling 'one moment please' in the client's language does not demand prodigious skill in language learning, and it surely makes a short wait more tolerable than a sullen: 'I don't speak French (or English)'. This seems a small point, but it is guaranteed to prevent futile apoplexies and countertop replays of the Plains of Abraham."

In the preface, Mr. Spicer explains that he chose the sex-manual format because, "for sheer motivation nothing beats biology . . . Putting both sexes on an equal footing seems a good example for doing the same with our national languages. And for both love and language, *Vive la difference* is not, even if clichéd, a bad slogan."

No one, not even Keith Spicer, would suggest that bilingualism will ever replace sex. But he's got a good point: why can't bilingualism be fun, too? ♦

## Birdman

# This birdman really flies

Terry (The Birdman) Jones is thinking of jumping off a 27-storey building.

Nothing suicidal about that. It's just a way of making a living for 31-year-old Terry, one of the world's tiny band of professional hang gliders, otherwise known as manned kite fliers.

Under ideal conditions, the men in these unique flying machines soar hundreds of feet above ground at speeds up to 50 miles an hour. The wind provides the motive power.

A glider consists of aluminium tubing, some 200 square feet of sailcloth, wire struts and a seat or harness.

Terry is thinking of gliding off a 27-storey tower in his hometown of Edmonton, Alberta. Meanwhile he's teaching 18 Canadian college students the art of hill soaring, which involves running down a steep slope beneath an 18-foot sail and taking off with an updraft of wind.

The birdman has taken part in hang-gliding sports at the British grand prix and in similar events in Canada, the United States and western Europe.

"It's a great feeling, soaring for hours like a gull in an air current," says Terry.

## Feathers

# It's in the feathers

Feathers that "tune into" the environment like radio antennae may explain the age-old riddle of bird migration, according to three Canadian scientists.

They say the feathers detect changes in temperature, humidity and in the earth's magnetic field. These changes cause a discomfort which induces the birds to take to the air.

And, the scientists theorize, it appears gravitational microwaves acting on the "antennae" stimulate the birds along a particular flight path. Laboratory tests have shown that the sensitivity characteristic of feathers changes with fluctuations in temperature and humidity.

In one test, chickens with tail feathers exposed in microwave fields showed lively reaction. Defeathered birds made little response.

The scientists are Dr. Cesar Romero-Sierra and J. Bigu Del Blanco of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, and Dr. Allan Tanner of the National Research Council, Ottawa.

\*(Westmount is a wealthy and largely English-speaking suburb of Montreal.)