

It was this government that discouraged commuter lines, this government that did not accept the recommendation of an all party committee to re-establish railroad transportation in south western Ontario. The mess in transportation is this government's mess. We on this side of the House have just about had enough of the slick talk, the flippancy and the evasiveness that we have read from the Minister of Transport. It is time that we received a realistic answer from him. It is time that the minister took his portfolio more seriously.

I say the same thing to the Minister of Agriculture, and for good measure I will throw in the Minister of Justice. All three of these ministers have tremendous responsibilities.

An hon. Member: And tremendous weight.

Mr. Mazankowski: Those are important and vital fields, but I do not believe these gentlemen are treating their portfolios with the seriousness that is demanded. I urge them to discard their lackadaisical attitude and take a firm hold of their portfolios.

I want to deal briefly with some comments that were made by the Prime Minister in his speech. I think it can be said that he successfully engaged in a ploy to sidestep the real issues facing the country by talking about such things as parliamentary reform, the question period, electronic voting, television in the House, and constitutional reform. While these subjects may be important I do not believe they merit the same attention as some of the urgent social and economic needs of this country. Surely at a time such as this when we have gone through an election, during which the Prime Minister waged a vigorous campaign on the important issues faced by the country, and after experiencing a void of three months, we should have something more positive from him than we did.

The Prime Minister mentioned Bill 22. I want to touch on that matter briefly because I have been receiving a tremendous amount of mail from interested people across this country. I think the Prime Minister owes it to the House and the country to clarify his position more fully. It seems to me that the intent of Bill 22 is to provide a new approach to bilingualism.

Bill 22 as it affects the Official Languages Act is somewhat ambivalent. Under that legislation the application of bilingualism will vary from one province to the other. As the Prime Minister stated, as recorded at page 47 of *Hansard*:

This government will stand in opposition by all possible means to any legislative or other measures liable to restrict the use on the part of citizens of the official language of their choice.

We have a clear indication from many learned gentlemen, constitutional experts, senior political observers, and many Quebeckers, particularly those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, that this bill constitutes an abridgement of the rights of minority groups in that they are not allowed to send their children to schools using the language of their choice. I think that that is a very important issue. Perhaps it is part of the whole government attitude toward the ethnic groups in this country. I think this was demonstrated today when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) put his question regarding Valentyn Moroz. He made a serious request, one

The Address—Mr. Mazankowski

that certainly could have been honoured by this government.

He simply asked that representatives of the Ukrainian-Canadian Committee and a qualified physician visit Mr. Valentyn Moroz to determine the state of his health. Surely this is not too much to ask for. The minister's reply was that the right hon. gentleman's request was irresponsible. I think this is an insult. It demonstrates the cavalier and contemptuous attitude of the government toward many ethnic minorities in this country. We also see the downgrading of multiculturalism in Canada in the fact that the minister who was in charge of that portfolio was fired and not replaced.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: We see it also in the discriminatory immigration laws according to which a central European, particularly one who is living behind the Iron Curtain, cannot legally immigrate to Canada.

I suggest that all these actions demonstrate the blatant contempt of the government for the many ethnic people of Ukrainian and Polish origin, and those from the Baltic countries, and I urge the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras), to reassess their position in that regard because this country derived its greatness from the melting of many cultures, the result of which is a truly multicultural country.

The issue in Bill 22 in my opinion reopens a festering wound which could be avoided if the Prime Minister simply clarified the government's policy and followed the principles enshrined in the Official Languages Act. I think that if language is fundamental to the preservation of a culture, the restrictions placed upon English in the province of Quebec constitute a step toward the deliberate destruction of the English culture in Quebec. Bill 22 goes against the grain and spirit of the Official Languages Act as well as of the Bill of Rights, and the Prime Minister, as the leader of our nation the author of the legislation, should put forth his position more vigorously instead of stating his regrets about the bill.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Tell us about the situation of the French in Ontario. Do they have equal rights?

Mrs. Sauvé: I had to write my exams in English.

● (1550)

Mr. Mazankowski: We teach French in Alberta. The best we can say about the Prime Minister is that his position can only be described as one of partial acquiescence.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Do you have equal rights for the French language?

Mr. Mazankowski: Yes we have but I do not want to fan the flames of emotion, Mr. Speaker. I am simply putting forth my personal views and they may not be the views of my party. I say this with a deep love of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!