

National Unity

the province, and to forbid a local community from determining whether its local democratic institutions, such as town councils and schools boards, should use English as well as French in their proceedings and their administrations—these are real and important denials of liberty.

The people of Canada are wondering how the federal government can ignore such inequalities in its midst. But then, a quick journey to Parliament Hill would instantly make one realize exactly what is going on in this country.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to be served by the ranks of the support staff on the Hill in the English language. Food is served in French, photostating is done in French and, excluding the secretaries, it is not stretching the facts to state that 79.9 per cent of the support staff on the Hill are of French origin.

In most cases these people are hired as bilingual staff regardless of their qualifications. Somehow the term bilingual has been grossly distorted. And may I also say for the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) benefit that the term "linguistic equality" has also been misused in the hiring practices on the Hill.

To me, if a person cannot say "potato" in English, they can hardly be considered as bilingual staff in a restaurant. But the personnel branch on the Hill does not feel that way. This in itself would indicate who is being discriminated against.

It is time that the federal government started practising what it preaches. If it wants language equality, then it is time that fairness and equality were promoted right down the line, fairness in hiring, and fairness in the allocation of federal government funds.

But instead of promoting fairness and straightening out the bilingualism and the Quebec mess, the government chose to issue yet another statement under the name "A National Understanding". The preface to this booklet, which was delivered to all our offices, states:

... the government wishes to emphasize that the official languages policy is not, and never was, intended to be a cure-all for all the problems of national unity.

The preface goes on to abridge the problems in our country today but states that:

... breaking in on them are our continuing problems of language. They are the most acute issues facing us, as the events of the province of Quebec have demonstrated.

This does not seem to be a logical statement to me. How can people of any country rationally decide on their country's future when they have no jobs and no money?

It is obvious that the Prime Minister, for some reason or another, has taken the defeat of the Liberal party in Quebec to mean only a vote for separatism. This is a wrong assumption indeed. The people of Quebec voted for what they thought was better government and better economic policies, and this is what the people of Canada want today. I am not sure whether the people of Quebec realize what they got or got what they want, but it is our unemployment situation over and above all the other problems in this country which is most important. Instead, the Quebec situation is being used as an excuse to ignore the problems of dissatisfaction with the unemployment situation. I suggest that at this time the problem of national unity is really a red herring to cover up matters of unemployment, inflation, and other serious crises.

The recently issued statement on the government's language policy does not even mention the inequalities inherent in Bill 1. The statement is full of generalities in bold print, but when one reads the finer print one can easily deduce that the government is in full agreement with Quebec policy.

The federal government has finally admitted that the place to teach the two official languages is in the schools, but its interpretation of the school system and who should be allowed into certain schools is definitely stilted. I would like at this point to quote a typical paragraph from the booklet entitled "A National Understanding", which, incidentally, makes no sense at all. However, this is in relation to the school system in our country, and it reads as follows:

In any event, the federal government asserts that it is incompatible with the unity of Canada that Canadian citizens should be able, when they move from province to province, to send their children to schools where they are taught in their own language. The government believes that necessary facilities should be provided, wherever they do not exist, for people moving from the province of Quebec to other provinces, and that they should continue to be provided for people moving from other provinces to the province of Quebec. In both cases, the federal government recognizes that there will be particular situations where this will not be feasible. But the principle remains.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. It being 11 o'clock p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 o'clock p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At eleven o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Special Order.