

*Official Languages*

Perhaps the most profound concern lies in the administration of the bill. If this bill is not administered fairly and sensibly it can very easily create more disunity than unity. I say that in all sincerity. We could very easily create more new grievances in trying to remove old grievances. We must consider the possibility of imposing hardship upon Canadians who are already in the public service and are not bilingual. I speak with some knowledge when I say it is not the easiest thing in the world to become proficient in the second language, particularly when one is not as young as he once was. I hope my hon. friends in the house who have a facility in the two languages will not minimize the difficulties that many people have in acquiring a second language. I hope they will not overlook the fact that it is so difficult as to be virtually impossible for many Canadians, particularly those who are rather mature.

This bill must be administered in such a way that it will not destroy the careers of the many Canadians now in our federal public service who are not bilingual. I suggest the emphasis ought to be on providing bilingual government services to the extent it is practical rather than upon the public servants providing those services being bilingual. This must be done to the fullest extent possible so that both French and English speaking persons will feel at home in the federal service. The emphasis should be placed to the fullest extent practical upon the bilingual aspect of the service rather than the bilingual aspect of the servant.

What I am suggesting may involve some extra costs, but what we are talking about will involve costs in any event. Confederation has always involved extra cost. I sincerely urge the government to consider my suggestion and provide the people of this country with firm assurances in this respect.

There is concern in the country that the bill may eliminate the possibility of careers in the public service for those growing up in the unilingual parts of Canada, whether these be French or English, where there is little opportunity under present conditions to acquire such a facility. I realize that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) and perhaps the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) have given assurances to those who may enter the public service in the future that facility in the two languages will not be required but a willingness to learn the two languages will. I urge the government to keep in mind that the facility to acquire a second language is not really available because the ability is not

always there. It is virtually impossible for some persons to learn a second language. Hon. members who have a facility in both languages ought not to overlook this fact. I suggest that the concept of the bilingual public servant ought not to be pushed farther than necessary. The emphasis ought to be placed on the bilingual nature of the service rather than the bilingual nature of the servant to the fullest extent possible and also to the extent that is fully consistent with French and English Canadians being able to pursue careers in the public service.

● (12:20 p.m.)

There are these fears regarding administration and I have to say that they have been enlarged by the unfortunate remark, offhand, I think, by the Prime Minister with respect to elevator operators. And there have been other rather sweeping remarks made by officials associated with the public service which have created fears. If this bill is to create more unity than disunity firm and unequivocal assurances must be given in these respects. I suggest they be written into the act to the fullest extent possible in order to allay these fears.

If we are to create a feeling of greater unity we have to think in terms of enlarging rights and opportunities, and not of restricting rights and opportunities.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Stanfield:** We have to think in terms of expanding the quality of federal services and their general availability in the two languages and not necessarily, and certainly not unduly, restricting the opportunities of unilingual Canadians in the public service.

We must remember too that a substantial proportion of Canadians are of origins other than French or English. We have to remember that the ability of many of these Canadians, at least initially, in the English and French languages is limited. I suggest that to the fullest extent possible it ought to be the policy of the federal government to provide government services in these other languages as well—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Stanfield:** —and that the provision of such services—

**An hon. Member:** There we go.

**Mr. Stanfield:** My hon. friend says "there we go". I want to emphasize to him that what