

*The Address—Mr. Baker*

riding is that of the federal government, which happens to be the largest employer. Whatever this government or any other government decides to do or not to do has a direct bearing on the quality of life of most of the people in the constituency.

In the throne speech the government has indicated that we will be asked to consider amendments to the Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Employment Act. I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the President of the Treasury Board, who is in the House, that I welcome that news. However the government may protest to the contrary, I am sorry to say it is a commonly held opinion that the government's record in this field is not without blemish. I join the staff associations in welcoming this intention of action that is long overdue. I hope when these amendments are presented to the House they will adequately deal with all the subjects these associations have laid before government on many occasions.

Without going into any detail at this time, I hope there is an expansion of those matters which can be the subject of negotiation and arbitration between employees and employer. I hope there will be reconsideration of the whole process of arbitration to ensure that it is expeditious, just and trusted. I hope this expansion will lead employees all over Canada to turn their backs upon the strike weapon and look to trusted tribunals for a way out of disputes between employers and employees.

I trust that the legislation will contain reconsideration of the whole field of managerial exclusions to ensure that they are reasonable and that to the greatest extent public servants in Canada will have access to their staff associations. I hope the areas of negotiation will be broadened to include matters in respect of pension plans, life and health insurance plans, rules on promotion, lay-off, transfer and probation. All these things are important to the people of Grenville-Carleton and to their families and, following the advice of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, I intend to speak on them at the appropriate time.

I am bound to say that with all other public service matters, the vast majority of the people of Grenville-Carleton are concerned about the policy of bilingualism as it applies to the public service. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) took pains in the opening of his speech on Tuesday night to remind us that institutional bilingualism is not to be confused with individual bilingualism. I was delighted to hear the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton vindicate me in the position I have taken with regard to the implementation of the Official Languages Act at every meeting throughout this past campaign.

I am pleased that the minister's remarks in respect of fair, humane and a new, flexible approach to the implementation of bilingualism in the public service are to be honoured. I was pleased to note that the Minister of Finance supported my view that the program should contain safeguards, and it does not contain them now, that would ensure that no career public servant of either language group would suffer penalty or hardship in our earnest efforts to implement a most difficult program.

I want to remind you and the members of the government, Mr. Speaker, that when a voice is raised against

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thoughtless and heavy-handed methods of implementation—and that is what we have in this country—that ought not to be twisted in the mind of any member of the cabinet into an implication that the voice is raised against the principles of the Official Languages Act. I ask the government not to confuse an attempt at a dialogue with destructive criticism.

Every public servant I met during the campaign—and I met thousands—supported the principles of the Official Languages Act. I met very few, however, who appreciated the attitude of the government in the matter of implementation—let that be clear. I heard about it, and I wager that the Minister of Finance heard about it. I wager that the President of the Treasury Board heard about it, and I wager that the Minister of Finance's ears are still burning over what he heard during that campaign. There was almost universal distrust, when there ought not to have been. There was anger, when the government could have fostered understanding. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), I am sorry to say, did nothing to allay that anger when he came into my riding at the invitation of my opponent and said, "If you don't like it, get out of the public service".

Mr. Speaker, I also heard another line, familiar to me, that came out of the speech of the Minister of Finance last Tuesday. He said:

• (1640)

I have little patience with those who insist they are in favour of bilingualism in principle but then proceed to engage in destructive criticism of almost anything beyond token efforts to put this into practice.

That is familiar, because the Prime Minister came into my riding and said he had no patience with those who merely paid lip service to the principle of the act. I ask the government not to confuse a request for reason, moderation and simple justice with lip service. I ask them to ensure that in whatever they do to cure any inequities for one group of Canadians, they do not begin to inflict inequities on another group. I say that because it is also within the true intent and spirit of the Official Languages Act. The act was meant to give equality of status to both our official languages. I am interested in ensuring that there is also equality for the people who work in those official languages in the public service of Canada.

I put the matter this way, Mr. Speaker, as simply as I can: public servants want to be hired and promoted on their own merit; public servants want a legal guarantee that the Pearson pledge will be honoured; public servants do not want favours, they want fair play.

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

**Mr. Baker:** These are the basic principles that ought to be embodied in anything we are asked to confirm in this parliament.

The Minister of Finance also said that no party has a monopoly on national unity. I want all hon. members of the House to understand that I agree with him, but I also want to remind him and the House that national unity is a two-way street, and I suggest that he remind the Prime Minister.