

### Official Languages

Service Commission, through training programs offered in the French language and by developing proposals, in conjunction with the governments of the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, to enhance the bilingual character of the national capital region, thus helping to realize the objective of achieving, within the merit principle, full participation in the public service by members of both the anglophone and the francophone communities

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** The hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield).

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

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I am almost overwhelmed by the interest of my hon. friends opposite in this subject. I must add, however, that I have received a note from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) expressing his regret that it would be almost impossible for him to be here tonight, and I certainly accept that. I am sorry he will not be here because I would have liked to say what I have to say in his presence.

**Mr. Fraser:** Where is the government?

**Mr. Bell:** I hope the press notes their absence.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Here is the government.

**Mr. Stanfield:** The resolution contains a preamble referring to the Official Languages Act and the status of French and English under that act. It goes on to set out nine principles which set forth what are commonly known as the Drury guidelines for achieving the purposes of the Official Languages Act within the public service, guidelines promulgated following the election of last autumn.

[*Translation*]

The proposed motion also recommends that this House, and I quote:

(ii) do further approve the taking of measures, after consultation with employee representatives, designed to produce a greater use of the French language at all levels in the Public Service, through increasing, where practical, the number of French Language Units, through further recruitment efforts by the Public Service Commission, through training programs offered in the French language and by developing proposals, in conjunction with the Governments of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, to enhance the bilingual character of the National Capital region—

[*English*]

The principles of the Official Languages Act are not in question in this debate; they are not before the House. They were approved when the Official Languages Act was adopted a few years ago. I supported the measure at that time and I continue to do so. I support the principles and I do not propose tonight to discuss or to reargue in any way the principles involved in the Official Languages Act.

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

**Mr. Stanfield:** But it is really a little puzzling to see what purpose this resolution is intended to serve. The Official Languages Act is law; it has legal effect. The part of the resolution before us setting out what are generally called the Drury guidelines are already announced government policy. The government, for example, did not consult

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

Parliament before adopting these guidelines. Obviously, they did not see the necessity to do so. The adoption of this resolution by the House and by the Senate does not have the force of law in any way. Obviously, the resolution does not modify in any way the Official Languages Act or any other legislation that has been adopted by this parliament.

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** Do you think it should go further?

**Mr. Stanfield:** I hope the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay) will have the courtesy to listen to me. I am quite prepared to deal with him in my usual way, but I do not know that it would add very much to this debate or to the importance of the subject.

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

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** Let us hear what you have to say.

**Mr. Fairweather:** An empty barrel!

**Mr. Stanfield:** The adoption of this resolution—I emphasize this—is not binding on the government. It is a matter of law, despite what the Prime Minister said in the House on May 7 of this year in answer to the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner). One might argue, of course, that there would be some moral obligation on the part of the government to comply with the resolution, but there certainly could be no legal obligation on the part of the government, or officials administering the legislation, because this resolution cannot have the force of law, cannot change any existing law and cannot be binding upon those who are administering the law.

In saying this I am not in any way questioning the competence of the House to proceed with an affirmative resolution, to express an opinion as it were, and I am certainly not intending to indicate, by virtue of expressing this opinion, that I propose to vote against the resolution. But I am saying that this kind of resolution obviously has no binding effect upon the ministers of the Crown nor upon the officials administering the legislation.

Earlier this session the Viet Nam resolution was before the House and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) indicated that the outcome of that resolution, that is, the views of the House as expressed on the resolution adopted by the House, would not bind him in the actions he might take, because the resolution would not have the force of law. So we intend to offer to the House an option to do more than simply express an opinion of the House. We intend to attempt to bind the government to the substance of the content of the resolution, and accordingly I will put forward an appropriate amendment at the conclusion of my remarks.

● (2010)

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

**Mr. Stanfield:** Sir, I believe very much in the support of institutional bilingualism in this country. I believe the cause of institutional bilingualism needs support. But I do suggest that we will not necessarily do very much to increase the support in the country for institutional bilin-