

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-152 be amended in Clause 27 by striking out line 16 at page 9 and substituting the following therefor:

"third anniversary of the coming into force".

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-152 be amended in Clause 27 by striking out line 24 at page 9 and substituting the following therefor:

"before each House of Parliament and referred to such committee of the House, of the Senate, or of both Houses of Parliament as may be designated or established for the purpose, within the".

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister responsible for housing asked whether I had come back to Ottawa to say no to the Government's Bill on service charges. If he will give a few moments of attention he will know perfectly well that I came back for a bit more than that. I came back for report stage on the Heritage Languages Institute Bill and whatever action may occur on it.

I come back with anything but good cheer on this particular Bill. Other colleagues have already pointed out the kind of treatment the Bill received in the legislative committee last week. It was outrageous treatment. One would have expected preparation for hearings, albeit limited hearings I am sure, for the testimony from persons in Canada who have a great concern about heritage languages, persons who have been involved in advancing the study of heritage languages, persons who are concerned about the organization of classes in their communities, in the various regions of Canada. I had fully expected that the establishment of a heritage languages institute in the City of Edmonton, with the responsibility to advance the study of heritage languages across the country, would have required some attention in the legislative committee to determine how the existing activities in the various regions of the country would relate and integrate with the programs that will be established by this institute. Of course, on this Friday afternoon, on September 30, it is a most doubtful question whether it will even be established, given all the speculation about an election.

The refusal of any such hearings in the legislative committee was a denial of all the conventions of the House and the parliamentary principles on which the Parliament of Canada is founded. During the last months of its mandate and the very rapid action on multiculturalism in certain areas, the Government is claiming that it understands the situation in this country and is concerned about advancing multiculturalism. At the same time it is prepared to reject the fundamental principles of the parliamentary system. That is a complete contradiction to all of its claims.

When Conservatives were members of the Opposition, they were well equipped to argue for the liberties of Parliament and assert the rights of the Opposition. For them to behave this way when they are in government is an abomination to the people of Canada. How can they make any claim to respecting the various cultures in this country and their traditions when those traditions we have derived from the Mother of Parliaments, including the principles of careful and deliberate

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consideration of legislation in this House and the legislative committees, were denied by government Members in the legislative committee?

• (1230)

The Taylors and the Turners who did the job on members of the Opposition in the legislative committee, who insisted that there be no hearing of witnesses at all, who pressed ahead and insisted that amendments to the Bill should be considered immediately, and who insisted that within hours the work should be done on the Bill in order to send it to the House, have no sense of what the Parliament of Canada is about.

I have attacked the Government once already in terms of the abuse of power. When it dealt with the multiculturalism Bill last spring, it suddenly cut off the process of hearings, put forward a limited list of witnesses to be considered, in the absence of opposition Members insisted on dealing with the amendments to this bill that have been put forward, and voted them down seriatim, one after another, in the legislative committee.

That abusive power is one that I have attacked from coast to coast in Canada. There are mailings to representatives of multicultural organizations and of the multicultural press. We have in this particular Bill even greater abominations, in the refusal of any kind of consideration of the testimony that could be provided by persons. This suggests a dreadful beginning for the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute when or if it is brought into existence.

If we establish this institute based on a request for a National Heritage Languages Institute in western Canada, to be based in Edmonton, it will be given a national mandate, as the Bill proposes to do. However, there is a refusal to talk with people who have been involved in the advancement of heritage languages anywhere in the country, as much in Edmonton and Winnipeg as in Toronto and Québec City. When there is this sort of refusal to consider what is going on, obviously there is no respect for traditions or for parliamentary conventions and no regard for the regional realities of Canada. What one has is the most shameless sort of playing of politics with a matter that is of enormous importance.

These comments have to be put on the record. One can only regret that at this late point in this Parliament, early on Friday afternoon of September 30, even government Members are hardly here to hear what a couple of their colleagues have chosen to do, presumably on the marching orders of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) or whoever is in charge of these abominations coming out of this Government these days.

To focus particularly on Motions Nos. 5 and 6 which we are considering this afternoon near the end of debate at report stage, we have two amendments by the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi), both of which I would want to support in my specific comments.