

Official Languages

I would also urge that leaders of business and labour and other community leaders and, indeed, all interested Canadians, read and study this statement so that they all may make a contribution to the solution of our national unity problems, which I personally prefer still to look upon not as problems but as challenges to go on using this policy to widen the dimension of diversity in Canadian democracy which it advocates.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Rondeau)—National Defence—Alleged use of Gander airport to transport Cuban troops to Angola; the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard)—Health—Preservation of confidentiality of doctor-patient relationship—Government action; the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon)—Social Security—Negotiations for reciprocal agreements with other countries—Date agreements effective.

● (1700)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS RESPECTING POLICY ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see tabled today the document entitled "A National Understanding" which spells out some of the basic principles and objectives of the national languages policy followed by the Government of Canada. I would say that not only do we welcome the document but we find it an unusually well written document, and I want to extend that compliment to its authors.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: One of the major problems which we find with this document is that in effect it is ten years late. This is the kind of statement of principle, statement of directions, that we should have had when the whole program of official languages began in this country. Unfortunately, because of the absence of such a statement of direction at the beginning, we have had, on the language policy of this country, a decade of national misunderstanding regarding the goals of the government and

[Mr. Roberts.]

the application of the national languages policy. I want to make clear that that was not the fault of parliament, and not the fault of members of parliament, because all the parties in the House approved the Official Languages Act when it came in.

The fault lies inescapably with the way in which this government has interpreted and implemented the mandate given it under the Official Languages Act by the House of Commons. That has caused particular concern in the Public Service of Canada. Those are concerns which the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) said he will be addressing later on, and I say to him that we look forward not only to hearing that statement of policy and statement of direction, but we also look forward to substantial reforms being made in the way that the Official Languages Act applies to the public service of the country.

One fundamental weakness that exists in this document—it is a weakness that I think the Secretary of State anticipated when he indicated that as regards the provinces this should be seen only as a statement of belief by the government—is that despite the heavy and direct interest of the provinces in the subject matter of this statement and of this document, there has been no evidence of any consultation with any of the provincial governments of Canada. In fact, if the information available to us is correct, copies of this paper were delivered to the premiers of the various provinces only within the last few days by federal officials who were following not any particular agenda of the government or of the provinces, but who simply dropped in where Air Canada schedules happened to allow them to drop in, and dropped in the laps of the provincial premiers what was, in effect, a *fait accompli*, and then moved on to some other capital.

It has been a striking fact that since the election of November 15 in the province of Quebec which reawakened the concern in the country about the question of national unity and renewed the concern in the country about our ability to co-operate together, the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) has not once called together the premiers of the ten provinces, his principal partners in confederation, to discuss with them and to take them into his confidence as to the directions in which he wants this country to move so that we might better achieve national unity. Clearly, he should have done that. There should have been consultation with the premiers on this document before it came to them as a *fait accompli*. There should have been consultation with the premiers, and in fact with the parliament of this country, on the question of national unity well before this time.

Instead of coming to parliament—that is being done later this month as a result of pressure brought by this party and others—instead of going to the premiers, and instead of going to the people and seeking solutions on some of the problems that face us, the Prime Minister has been relying, on the whole, broad question of national unity, on establishing little bureaucracies tucked away here in Ottawa and on writing a new national languages policy and sending it out as a *fait accompli* to the provinces.