

Adjournment Debate

again the liability is established. I do not know how that fits into the investigation. I believe the investigation was meant to be more broad than that, but it might include that.

The point which I think has to be made, and I can make this with some force because I was involved very directly—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I think the Hon. Member will have to make that point at another time.

Mr. Blaikie: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member finished at six minutes after six o'clock and the Parliamentary Secretary had three minutes to speak.

Mr. Blaikie: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, we might seek the unanimous consent of the House for the Parliamentary Secretary to finish his remarks. That was not the way I read the clock. I thought that the Parliamentary Secretary had at least another minute.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): He had his three minutes.

Mr. Blaikie: No, he didn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. If the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary would like to finish his remarks, I will grant him another 30 seconds. But, the Hon. Member finished his question at six minutes after six o'clock and the Parliamentary Secretary had three minutes in which to make his comments. Those are the time limits as far as the Adjournment Debate is concerned. If the Parliamentary Secretary has anything else to say, then he can say it.

● (1810)

Mr. Gurbin: I have much more to say, Mr. Speaker, and I will take 30 seconds to do so. The liaison which has occurred personally between our Department and the provincial Department, and those people on site, has been ongoing and extremely good from the very beginning. Finally, in my last 15 seconds, I will say that reconsideration of the whole toxic program is in fact what the Minister is spending all of her energy on right now. She has focused in a direct way on the consideration of all the programs which fall within that gambit.

[Translation]

BILINGUALISM—DECISION TO REDUCE NUMBER OF BILINGUAL POSITIONS AT RENOUS PENITENTIARY

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland-Kent): Mr. Speaker, my question was directed to the Solicitor General of Canada (Mr. MacKay) and concerned the number of bilingual positions at the Renous penitentiary in New Brunswick.

His colleague, the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Jardine), stated a few weeks ago that the number of bilingual positions in Renous would be reduced

from 50 per cent to 30 per cent and exclaimed that this was good news. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General added in one of his statements in this House that this proportion was quite representative of the local population.

The question I ask myself and want to ask the minister is this: Should the Atlantic institution in Renous satisfy the local population first or should it instead serve its inmates as its first priority? In my opinion, it is obvious that our Atlantic Institution will have to accommodate first and foremost the inmates coming from every Atlantic region and even from elsewhere in Canada. It is therefore difficult if not impossible to predict the linguistic distribution of future inmates. That is why it is imperative to make sure that penitentiary services are available in Canada's two official languages. Consequently, as much of the staff as possible ought to be bilingual.

Mr. Speaker, it is a matter of logic and justice, especially. Why should people who have spent years in penitentiary and who already have heavy responsibilities be forced to speak in only one language? Just because a group is in minority does not mean that their needs can be disregarded. On the contrary, you undoubtedly know what the Commissioner of Official Languages said about this issue. Here is a quotation from his latest annual report:

The Correctional Service has responded to our 1983 audit but will have to do a great deal more to provide adequate minority-language services to inmates.

Further on, he goes on to say:

Despite everything, Acadians are still considerably less equal than Anglophones with respect to Government services in their own language.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the Government must implement the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Secondly, even if we keep in mind the argument of the Solicitor General who claims that the proportion of unilingual and bilingual positions must reflect the linguistic reality of the population, there again he is mistaken. When the establishment of the penitentiary was first announced, had it not been agreed that the staff would be hired in the ridings of Kent, Northumberland and Gloucester? Population figures for those three ridings reveal that the anglophone-to-francophone ratio is the opposite of that in the Miramichi region. To put it another way, those ridings and the one I represent have a lot more Francophones than Anglophones.

In addition, I must emphasize that New Brunswick's unemployment rate has increased to 17 per cent, and that in the south-eastern part which includes the counties of Albert, Kent and Westmorland, the rate has soared to 21 per cent, and that is totally unacceptable. And yet, we had been promised tens of thousands of jobs. It is really terrible!

Why did the Minister not respect the first agreement, and why did the Minister not take all those figures into consideration, for they fully justify his initial decision to hire bilingual applicants to fill 50 per cent of the positions?