

Official Languages

In the end, the provinces themselves account for the majority of the population. Therefore the provinces are in a better position to take effective action with regard to bilingualism, since education comes under their jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, government policy on bilingualism, according to a statement made by the present Prime Minister's predecessor on April 6, 1966 is the following and I quote:

—it will be normal practice for oral or written communications within the service to be made in either official language at the option of the person making them...communications with the public will normally be in either official language—

The linguistic and cultural values of both English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians will be reflected through civil service recruitment and training; and

A climate will be created in which public servants from both language groups will work together towards common goals, using their own language and applying their respective cultural values, but each fully understanding and appreciating those of the other.

That is exactly, I believe, what the Cr ditistes have been preaching in Canada for many of years. It is precisely what I said in the house almost seven years ago. Mr. Speaker, our attitude in this regard does not change.

I think it is possible to maintain unity in Canada. But to do so, the language problem is not the only one to solve. There are also economic matters to be considered, as the hon. member for York South said a moment ago.

The problems in the west are similar to those in the east. The wheat growers' problems are exactly the same as those of eastern dairy farmers and those of Ontario corn growers, and so on.

There is a high priority the government could have looked after. The government might have decided to introduce a positive legislation regarding Canadian economy. Instead, the government preferred to introduce the official languages bill.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot oppose this bill: On the contrary, we shall support it.

As far as the amendments referred to by the hon. member for York-South and by the leader of the official opposition are concerned, we shall probably know of what nature they are after the study in committee. Until then, what we must know is whether or not both languages, French and English, will be recognized as official languages, from St. John, Newfoundland, to Vancouver and Victoria, from coast to coast. We support Bill C-120.

[Mr. Caouette.]

Cr ditistes will probably make certain reservations regarding the enforcement of the language bill in the federal service. At that time, the recriminations or complaints we shall have to make will be put forward frankly and freely before the responsible minister and the right hon. Prime Minister who sponsors the bill.

This Mr. Speaker is all I wanted to say this afternoon. We believe it is possible for French-speaking Canadians to fight for their rightful place within Confederation and for English-speaking Canadians to know what their position is.

In conclusion, I am still convinced that it is impossible to make an English Canadian out of a French Canadian or vice versa. However, both can make good Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Gr ce): Mr. Speaker, before I go into the principal points I want to make during this debate I should like to deal with a few of the remarks made by the leaders of the opposition parties. The leaders of these opposition parties never cease to amaze me. They come into this chamber and state with great passion that they favour the bill, yet they drag out red herrings and set up straw men to be knocked down. Many of the things mentioned really have nothing to do with the bill.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Mr. Dinsdale: They at least think for themselves.

Mr. Allmand: Perhaps if you listen and you will find out whether they do. The leader of the Cr ditiste party said at the beginning of his speech that he would like to know why the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is not here this afternoon. He pointed out that the Prime Minister was here this morning. The Prime Minister flew to Moncton, New Brunswick, this afternoon to receive an honorary doctorate degree from the University of Moncton, which is I believe the living image of growing bilingualism in the maritime provinces. That engagement was a long standing one. I do not think anyone would suggest the Prime Minister should have remained this afternoon and passed up the opportunity to fulfil that engagement. The spokesman for the New Democratic party and the Leader of the Conservative party were greatly incensed because the bill was introduced for second reading by the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) and they