

*Supply*

could have done what so many others did and hide behind the confidentiality and anonymity of the Tory Caucus. He did not. He had the courage to express his convictions and defend them. The Hon. Member of Simcoe South, at least, cannot be accused of being a wet hen, and, we are looking forward to the debate and to hearing his views and his case against Bill C-72. That is the whole purpose of debate, Mr. Speaker.

We want to hear the arguments for and against this Bill; we want to have a real debate on this serious issue. If some Conservatives are against this Bill, let them rise in this House and let the Government give them an opportunity to express their fears, their objections and their uncertainties. A debate will give us an opportunity to find solutions to their resistance, and it will also provide the best opportunity for them to make their feelings understood and for us to make our own views clear.

I would not want such an important piece of legislation to be sneaked through the House. The Government must not ask us to adopt the Bill on the sly on a Friday afternoon as it suggested before the holidays. Let there be a debate so that everybody can express their views. That is democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Some will say that, in 1969, there were only three speeches by then party leaders at the second reading stage. That is true. However, I would remind them that second reading gives all Members of Parliament an opportunity to discuss the principles of a Bill, and that it would be at the very least strange if this Government refused to let those who wish to do so express themselves freely and clearly on this issue. We should not forget that, in 1969, 19 Conservative Members voted against the principle of the Official Languages Act at second reading stage without even having an opportunity to explain to the House why they were against the legislation. Mr. Speaker, we have just adopted the Meech Lake Agreement. There is already a basis, an official statement by all Conservative Members, in support of linguistic duality. Bill C-72 gives more strength and momentum to the Meech Lake Agreement and contributes much to its implementation. Those who are against recognition of our official languages should therefore rise and explain their views, because recognizing this principle would support the Meech Lake Agreement. It is therefore important for the Government to allow a serious debate on this Bill.

• (1130)

I shall not dwell on the details today, Mr. Speaker, as I hope that there will be other opportunities to do so. I want to speak about a historic cultural, social and political trend, that of federal administrative bilingualism which, as we know, is an aspect of institutional bilingualism, the others being parliamentary bilingualism with which we are familiar, judiciary bilingualism which we often hear mentioned, and educational bilingualism which we are still trying to implement in our provinces. Well, I distinguish between this administrative bilingualism and individual bilingualism. But I should like to deal with the historical trend which is trying to establish a federal administration with a view to meeting the hopes and expectations of Canadians. This administrative bilingualism is

a vehicle to the promotion of which, I confess, I devote a considerable part of my energy.

It is the justification of my presence here as representative of a riding in the national capital, a national capital which should reflect what is best in this country. And finally my personal commitment for more than 30 years to the social, educational and political areas has had a profound influence on me. I strongly believe in a Canada which is both respectful and generous, and which is essentially characterized by its French-English or, if you prefer, English-French duality. I am one of those who believe that our country is stronger and richer because of its linguistic duality, that it will live on forever, whatever the resistance.

I prompted this emergency debate today because of the sadness and anger I felt upon realizing that the Government was having cold feet on the issue of administrative bilingualism, that it was not pursuing it with enough vigour and that it was weakening in its determination. I felt the need to strengthen its political will and re-inforce its commitment to bring this Bill before the House, so that we may discuss it freely and clearly, and finally adopt it because it is a good Bill.

My feeling about the Government's procrastination in presenting Bill C-72 is shared by a great many people, Madam Speaker, not only the members of my caucus, but also the provincial associations, the Official Languages Commissioner, as well, I suggest, as many other members of this House who do not always see eye to eye with me, including many Tory members who would like this Bill to be read a second time and finally passed on third reading.

Madam Speaker, from a Government that is preaching top priority enshrinement of Canada's basic duality, the French and English duality, that delay is totally illogical. Would it be that the Mulroney Government is only interested in elections ratings, short-term electoral points? Must I remind them that we in the Liberal Party supported by a huge majority the Meech Lake Agreement, although we had some reservations? Why? Because we felt it was important to recognize this country's fundamental, basic feature—French and English duality. This being so, should we not also recognize the immediate consequence of Meech Lake? Should we not also accept the consequences of that duality?

If this country is dualistic, French and English, by reason of language, culture and civil law, can it not prove that duality by giving itself a Public Service that reflects such a nature? Is the Government not bound to practice what it preaches?

After promising heaven to the supporters and hell to the opponents of Meech Lake, will this Government remain in limbo, especially in view of the fact that so much time was needed to get started on bilingualism at the Government level? Are we aware for instance that this Hon. Chamber only got simultaneous Translation in 1959? Are we aware that in the early 60's, when I first took an active interest in politics, the talk was of bilingual cheques and bilingual menus at the parliament's restaurant?