

Official Languages

when the final ballot is cast, who their elected representative will be. When a member is elected and comes here he is entitled to have a say, whether or not the minister likes it. In the next election there may possibly be a change in the area bordering my constituency. Any responsible and sensible member of the house who is even remotely concerned about the nation and its unity must support the principle of this bill, and those who do not are intentionally damaging the esprit de corps of our great nation.

This government has done one of the worst selling jobs in history in explaining the bill, and no amount of explaining or passing the buck, as the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) suggested, will take them off the hook in this regard. I suggest to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) of this country, if and when he goes to the west, he will have a wonderful opportunity at that time to explain to the people what the bill is all about. I am sure he will hear many people express to him what they think about it. They are open minded, if they receive the truth from responsible people.

I am sure that all members of this house must know that the French and English speaking people are prepared to meet on equal ground as equals, and to have a mutual understanding to a degree which would surprise even an imaginative mind in this house. We have heard a lot of talk about imagination and about people not accepting each other. These people are prepared to accept one another, and most of them will realize that if given a chance. Our young people will lead the way in proving that this bill is workable. I have to remind the house that only a short two years ago a band from St. Jerome went to our city of Moose Jaw and in exchange a band from Moose Jaw went to St. Jerome. After these two bands visited back and forth, they found they got along very well. This does not amaze me because an intermingling of the two races is bound to bring harmony. I am sure that if the Secretary of State were to provide sufficient funds for student exchanges from east to west, he would find this so-called problem which he expects in some areas would not exist at all.

I should like to conclude by saying that the greatest danger which I believe exists with regard to the implementation of Bill C-120, is in having too many jackasses trying to fit either the French or the English speaking people into some patterns in our society. All that is needed is an opportunity for everyone

[Mr. Skoberg.]

in this country to live together in an economic atmosphere which will provide an equal opportunity for all, be they of English, French, Scandinavian, European, Asiatic, Indian, African or any other ancestry.

I am sure that the Secretary of State will realize that these people are really concerned about economic problems. They are also concerned about living together in harmony, and this will not be achieved by sarcasm from a member of the government.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I will take only a very few moments to express a few views that I have with regard to the bill and to relate what I gather are the viewpoints of people in my part of Canada. So far as I am concerned, I thoroughly approve the principle of the bill and intend to vote for it. I think that everybody in Canada who belongs to the two major races is entitled under our constitution to the provision of federal government services in their own language, wherever they are grouped in sufficient numbers. It is bad enough trying to figure out the intricacies of the Income Tax Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act in your own language, let alone trying to do so in some language with which you are not too familiar.

The hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and others have suggested that the government might well give consideration at a future date to the provision of services to new immigrants in their own language. Often people who are fairly well advanced in years and who have newly arrived in Canada have difficulty in learning a new language. They may learn it sufficiently to become Canadian citizens, but they are not fluent in it. If we are going to establish a program of expanded immigration into Canada I hope the government will consider the provision of federal services under the Unemployment Insurance Act and the Income Tax Act to new Canadians in their own language for a short period of time wherever the concentration of that one linguistic group makes it appropriate. I do not want to be misinterpreted and I do not want it to be said that I am trying to fragment Canada by language. I am not. My point is that elderly people coming to this country have difficulty learning a new language, and I think something might be done to help them if we wish to encourage immigration.

I am thoroughly in agreement with the principle of the bill and intend to vote for it