

policy in this area, as is the case with the Northwest Territories. There should also be some clarification with regard to the impact of the clause affecting the courts.

Canada is maturing in its approach to the whole question of official languages. It is good that the House hear all opinions with regard to this subject. That is the only way that we can develop a larger consensus with regard to official languages in Canada and develop greater unity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Are there questions or comments? The Chair recognizes the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson).

Mr. Nickerson: Madam Speaker, following along the non-partisan lines adopted by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) I would like to compliment him on digging out the flaws in the Bill we have before us. They are flaws which do not deal with the language issue but rather with constitutional issues as they affect the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. I am thankful for the assistance that has been rendered by the Hon. Member in pointing that out. He has pointed out the anachronism that exists in Clause 90 of the Bill. It states that the Official Languages Act of the Northwest Territories, which was enacted by the Legislature of that Territory, cannot be changed without the consent of the Parliament of Canada. That is completely unacceptable to the people who live in the Northwest Territories. There is no need for such a provision in this day and age.

With respect to the Yukon, it is treated even worse. It is treated as if it is a department of Government.

My question to the Hon. Member is this. Is what he has said the official policy of the NDP? Can we count on the support of the NDP when this Bill gets to committee for the necessary amendments that have to be made if this Bill is to be made acceptable to the people of the North?

Mr. Keeper: Madam Speaker, it is curious to me that the Hon. Member started out by indicating the non-partisan fashion in which he wished to proceed and then asked me what is the position of the New Democratic Party on this matter.

I am sure that my colleagues will see the wisdom of my comments and that they will recognize that this is a federal country. I hope they will see that there is no way in which the federal Government should be imposing policies on the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. I hope they will see that the notion that there has to be parliamentary concurrence in the Official Languages Act of the Northwest Territories should be removed from the Bill. That the Yukon should be treated the same as a department of the federal Government is a mistake in policy. It should be treated on the basis of what it is, that is, a legitimate legislature of the country. It should be allowed to develop its own policies.

Mr. Orlikow: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a direct question of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper). He has just replied to a question

Official Languages Act

asking him about the policy of the New Democratic Party on this Bill. I wonder if the Hon. Member has noted the comments of the Conservative Member of Parliament for Winnipeg—Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) and what he thinks of them, given the fact that in the City of Winnipeg there are each year an increasing number of English-speaking students attending French immersion schools right through to the end of grade nine, including schools in the constituency of Winnipeg—Assiniboine. Would the Hon. Member like to comment on the views expressed by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Assiniboine?

Mr. Keeper: Madam Speaker, I must be honest, I have not paid much attention to the comments of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie).

Mr. Orlikow: They do not deserve much.

Mr. Keeper: I must say that I have noticed that the schools in Winnipeg have increasing numbers of children who are taking instruction in immersion classes. Those in an English-speaking community are learning to speak French. When they complete their schooling they will be able to speak French with ease. They will not have to learn French in the way in which I have learned it, struggling word by word. I am happy to see that this is happening.

I know that the amount of French immersion is increasing in Winnipeg. It has reached something in the order of 25 per cent in the City of Edmonton. In the City of Ottawa it is something in the order of 50 per cent. I know that in a small rural village just outside Selkirk, Manitoba, which is a small town, the families were given the option of keeping their children in the village school or sending them to an immersion school. Half the families chose to send their children to the immersion school.

What this indicates is that we are raising a new generation and that some of the attitudes that are expressed today about the French language in Canada will become a thing of the past with this new generation. We are building a new, more tolerant Canadian society, a society in which the prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes of the past will in fact be a thing of the past. For the moment, we are still going through a period of transition. However, there will be a new dawn with the new generation, people who will understand both communities and both language groups.

• (1130)

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP have completely missed the point. This Bill has nothing to do with children learning to speak French. In Winnipeg—Assiniboine there is one of the highest entry rates for immersion school because people realize that they will not get jobs in the Government if they do not learn French. However, just because an Anglophone learns French does not mean that he will get the job. He has to take a language diagnostic analysis, and if he does not pass that he is turned down.