

Official Languages Act

Those realities across the country we can do very little about. However, as Members of Parliament we can ensure that Bill C-72 becomes the law of the land. We can ensure that the policy is renewed and strengthened and extended, whatever happens to Clause 2 of the Bill. As we strengthen official bilingualism and reassure the majority in Québec, perhaps we will see a day, sooner rather than later, when restrictions on English in the Province of Québec will seem less necessary to the majority; when French flourishes there and in so many other parts of Canada far beyond the National Capital Region in a community in which we are truly committed.

Let me say in conclusion, with respect to the concern about employment and the public service expressed by so many of those who are still opposed to the policy and the Bill, that this is surely addressed under a very simple rubric. We now have in the marginal note not the fact of law but the reality that the Government practices a commitment to equitable participation. When the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Masse) seeks to have a quarter of his staff be francophone, that reflects proportions. The reality of employment equity for the target groups that the Government has declared, in which the ethnocultural diversity of the country is to be recognized, is the context within which equitable participation by the official language communities will occur. In Clause 39 of Bill C-72, we have an assurance that proportionality will be maintained.

With those concluding reassurances to the English-speaking people of this country whom I particularly address because of my background and experience and the concerns I know are out there, I want to urge all to join me in giving firm support to Bill C-72.

Mr. Speaker: Questions or comments.

Mr. McCain: Mr. Speaker, my comment will be brief. I wish to state unequivocally to every Member of this House and every citizen of this nation that I have been a supporter of bilingualism. That position has cost me in my constituency. It nearly cost me my seat on one occasion. Therefore, I think my dedication to bilingualism has been proven by my vote, my behaviour, and I cannot be seen as opposing bilingualism in practice in the Government of Canada. Let that be clearly understood by all concerned.

I want to compliment those whose principles required they stand in contradiction of my stand, such as the Hon. Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Hamelin) and his confreres. I compliment them on the principles they espouse. It is only appropriate that one should recognize the principles of others. My difficulty has not been with bilingualism but with its heavy-handed administration to the prejudice of unilingual Canadians of whatever language. Let there be no misunderstanding about that. I do not rise to confront my Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) or my Party. I rise in support of the principle which I believe transcends some of the obligations one has as a member of a Party. This Government has been a good government, perhaps the best in the last 25 years, so let there be no misunderstanding about my loyalty to bilingualism.

However, I want to see unilingual Canadians able to use federal premises in the language of their choice, whether it be

in Chicoutimi or St. Stephen. I want to see unilingual Canadians able to tender on the Government of Canada in their own language. I want to see bilingual competence in federal offices. However, I do not want to see it to the prejudice of the talent of unilingual Canadians who may seek education which this Bill does not offer.

• (1250)

I want to compliment the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) for his very fine and reassuring speech. He has given Canadians the reassurance that this may be applied in an even-handed way. My objection is that scientists and experts, in whatever sphere, find themselves barred from occupations as federal civil servants because of lack of language.

I, Sir, have had more difficulty with learning language than any other subject, and I sympathize with those who are dead-ended because they have neither been offered training nor are capable of accepting it.

The assurance I would like is that there will be unilingual opportunity in Canada in every sphere. My position in no way qualifies my support of my colleague or my Prime Minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): I must say I do not doubt the sincerity of the Hon. Member who has just finished speaking, although I believe many of them do not fully understand the purpose of this Bill. I know there are many anglophones in English Canada. I said it, and I will say it, without trying to anger anyone. In Canada, especially English Canada, there are many people who say: We love you French Canadians...

[English]

As I said, I am a *Canadien français*, and there is no translation for that.

[Translation]

There are English-speaking Canadians who love French Canadians, but, as I have said before, in subservience if possible! But that cannot be. It is impossible, and we will not accept it. That must be understood. That is what the people who are outside now, as we speak, do not understand. We want to be at home. We want to be ourselves. We are not taking anything away from others who also have the right to be themselves. That is what must be understood, and that is the purpose of this Bill, the continuation of everything we have known. Lastly, I would like to thank someone who has always cared about us. I think we ought to pay tribute to him, our colleague who has always...

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to have to interrupt the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme), but his time has elapsed. Consequently, unless there is unanimous consent that the debate continue, it is my duty, since it is now 12:42 p.m., pursuant to the Order passed on Monday, July 4, 1988, to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of this bill.