

*Official Languages*

They are concerned about the danger to their future employment and careers from the concept embodied in this legislation. And there is real reason for this concern because all kinds of events are taking place in this country which are most unsettling to English speaking and unilingual people in this nation. Foremost is the fact that they will become second class citizens because they do not have the second language or the capability of securing a working knowledge of the second language.

This limitation does not necessarily arise because they are not intelligent. I have never endeavoured to secure a knowledge of the French language mainly because I know from past experience that it would come very hard for me. At the same time I have tried to the best of my ability to see that my children have a working knowledge which will allow them to become bilingual in the days ahead should they desire to do so. But it is not a question of any compulsion being placed on me by anyone. I hold this view because I believe my children will be enriched by being able to speak more than one language. I have nothing against them or anyone else being able to speak many languages if that is their desire, but I do not think anyone should be compelled to secure a working knowledge of more than one language and I do not think the absence of such knowledge should in any way jeopardize his possibilities so far as employment or promotion in the government service is concerned. I do not like the idea of any more authorities being set up in Canada to make decisions as will be the case when the commissioner proposed by this bill takes up his duties.

Some of the proposed amendments cause me as much concern as does the bill itself. The proposed amendment to clause 9 reads as follows:

Every department and agency of the Government of Canada and every judicial, quasi-judicial or administrative body or Crown corporation established by or pursuant to an act of the Parliament of Canada has, in addition to but without derogating from the duty imposed upon it by subsection (1), the duty to ensure, to the extent that it is feasible for it to do so, that members of the public in locations other than those referred to in that subsection—

The reference is to bilingual districts.

—where there is a significant demand therefor by such persons, can obtain available services from and can communicate with it in both official languages.

Where would that lead us if it became law? Surely it is a provision which implies an extension of power well beyond the proposal

[Mr. Coates.]

embodied in the bill concerning the establishment of bilingual districts.

It is my belief that we accomplish nothing by trying to impose the French language upon Canadians by compulsion. It is my belief that the schism in evidence today in this nation between the two major language groups could become an unbridgable gap if we continue the debate on Bill C-120. It is my hope that the committee, when it is established and considers this measure, will call a good deal of evidence as to the competence of the Parliament of Canada to legislate an amendment to the British North America Act, for this, in my view, is what Bill C-120 does. It is my hope that the committee will recommend that the reference which many in this country have urged should be made to the Supreme Court of Canada to determine the constitutionality of the bill in question will, in fact, be made so that we may know whether we are endeavouring to do what is right or, in the alternative, whether we are trying to do by the back door what we cannot do by the front door because it is impossible for the federal government to secure the consent of the provinces to the amendments they have in mind.

• (12:40 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Ouellet (Papineau):** Mr. Speaker, since the outset of this debate, many speakers have stressed the fact that this bill will be welcomed by Canadian youth.

I wish to take part in this debate on the status of the official languages of Canada to express not so much the views of a government member, but rather the views of a 30-year-old Quebecer who, for the last twenty years, that is from the first time he left Quebec, has been asking himself many times whether he is a full-fledged citizen in this country.

Anyone who looks at the situation without prejudice should agree with me that Canadians of French language and culture do not have everywhere in Canada the same opportunities as English-speaking citizens, if they want to live, work and bring up their children in their mother tongue.

This definite situation has existed for quite some time, and it has not varied in spite of the thousands of grand patriotic speeches delivered in the past by men of authority and, very likely, of good will.

Today, this situation must change. Otherwise, I would not hesitate to predict that