

position as well as against the incorrect assignment of the level of language competence required.

One element absent from the government's program on official languages is compulsion; its only excess, in the eyes of some, is compassion. If these are faults, Mr. Speaker, the government is prepared to bear with them. For no person now in the employment of the Public Service of Canada will be compelled to become bilingual. On the contrary, as I have previously emphasized, the government's policy is intended to allow those who wish to remain unilingual to do so. I am sure, however, that the opportunities given to become bilingual will commend themselves to public servants and all Canadians.

The implementation of these principles and the adoption of this resolution is an invitation; an invitation to public servants, an invitation to staff associations, an invitation to all Canadians and, Sir, an invitation to the representatives of all Canadians in this House, to give unqualified support to the implementation of a policy first put to this House by Prime Minister Pearson, and so heartily endorsed by the leaders of all parties in this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, deep down I am convinced that we are now writing a page in history of which our fellow-citizens and future generations will either be critical or proud, depending on whether we have acted with prejudice or foresight.

I shall support wholeheartedly the amendment of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) and the motion before the House, all the more so because the last part of it deals with the crying need to attract more Francophones to the Public Service and give them more recognition.

I sincerely hope that the present debate will continue in the same non partisan vein as the first interventions of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Lewis).

The linguistic challenge made by Canada, I accept and, like so many others, I intend to act upon it actively.

I want to place myself well above emotional considerations, on the level of facts and needs.

Even now in 1973, the situation of bilingualism in the Public Service, statistics on the subject, everything prompts us to speak on this motion in terms of justice.

As eloquent, I was about to say sadly eloquent as those figures maybe which were conveyed to us in answer to the relevant questions asked by our colleagues of the Social Credit Party, or again following the publication of the second annual report of the official languages commissioner, how much more specific and more striking, Mr. Speaker, would they not be if we could refer today to the famed and long awaited Coulombe report on the efficiency of the bilingualism programs in the Public Service.

Official Languages

By the way, I should like to urge all my colleagues in this House to join me in requesting the publication of that report without delay.

This synthetic report should not be reserved for the sole use of the government. That this tool cannot be used as a source of information during our proceedings is surely inexplicable and therefore shameful.

I hope that the Fox report on the creation of bilingual districts, whose publication is scheduled for the fall of 1973, will be made public sooner.

If there is an area where we must not fear to face the facts, however hard they may seem to some people, it is that of our two official languages, in other words, linguistic justice.

Some recent data—I shall mention two for the consideration of my colleagues—show that in 1971, out of 66,675 positions "called" by the Public Service Commission and by federal departments, only about 8 per cent required a unilingual French-speaking incumbent, while approximately 80 per cent, that is ten times more, required English only.

Here is now another statistics, one among many which discloses the unfair situation in which French-speaking Canadians find themselves: in 1972, contrary to the recommendations of the 1962 Dion report, only 12 per cent of high officials were French-speaking and half of them only were from Quebec.

Therefore it is on the basis of those facts and many others and in view of the challenge that Parliament, I insist Parliament, accepted in July 1969 with the adoption of the Official Languages Act, that all fair-minded people should talk about bilingualism in Public Service.

Yet in all fairness and realistically, we must be concerned with the only and real purpose of the law, namely the equality of the French and English languages in the federal government with the specific purpose of providing the Canadian public whenever possible and the need warrants it with federal services in both official languages; moreover, we must as much as possible allow all federal employees to work with language of their choice, usually their mother tongue.

Then we can talk about institutional bilingualism relations with the public, and working language in federal institutions.

Consequently, if we want the words justice, equity and equality to mean something, all of us we must take effective steps in the recruiting and promotion of federal employees particularly those who are likely to deal with the public. For the same reasons, and if need be in other circumstances and places, we will also have to make sure that many of the recommendations and suggestions of the official languages Commissioner will be followed up.

Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleagues, in our studies and even when dealing with legislation, let us keep these considerations in mind. Let us not be distracted by untruths, by false pretences or still by extremes in our way or the other.

In order to do useful work in this essential field so urgent for the future of Canada, let us not, for pity's sake,