

*The Address—Mr. Blaker*

other ethnic groups which form the mosaic of Canada, the two official languages of Canada meet and intertwine.

[English]

It will not have escaped the notice of members of this House that the hon. member for Nipissing, who has just moved the acceptance of the throne speech, is a Francophone from Ontario. He is, therefore, a member of a minority language group in his own province. I, too, am a member of a minority in the province of my residence, the Province of Quebec. However, together we agree that our nation is built of two founding language groups; that each linguistic group must be able to deal with the federal government in the language of its choice. In view of the results of the past election, I should like to go even further.

[Translation]

My colleagues and I from the Province of Quebec have not come to this House of Commons to preside over or take part in any discussion as to the right of either language group to address itself to and to communicate with its federal government in the language of his choice. It is not a matter to be discussed. It is a matter of right.

It is not a privilege to be accorded by one government or another, it is an absolute moral and legal right on the part of French Canadians, just as it is on the part of English Canadians, to make use of their language when communicating with this government.

[English]

There are those who claim that the bilingualization of the public service has gone too far too fast. May I say with great respect to the members of this House that it has proceeded not too quickly, but altogether too slowly. None the less, the government in its wisdom has seen fit to stress, again because of the confusion,—and I sometimes wonder if the confusion has not been deliberately cultivated and exploited by those opposed to bilingualization—that the process of bilingualization of the Public Service of Canada is limited in scope and absolutely protective of the rights of all members of the public service.

In due course a number of positions—a relatively small number, some 25,000 out of a total of 300,000 public service positions—will be designated as being of a bilingual character. Approximately half of those 25,000 positions are occupied by people who are bilingual. Those holding such positions will have the option of learning a second language or of transferring laterally into positions of equal pay and status and equal opportunity for advancement.

I take this matter to be of the utmost seriousness. Many of us had thought that the great debate on Canadian unity was over; that the issue was at least settled in the sense that Canadians from one coast to another, had accepted the fact that we are a bilingual bicultural nation. It is quite apparent that the subject is not settled, that in the minds of some people there are grounds for further discussion and delay.

[Translation]

My colleagues and I from the Province of Quebec do not come to ask this privilege of the government of Canada; we are not here to debate this principle; we shall not

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debate it. It is an absolute right without which there is no meaning to the word Canada as we know it now.

[English]

Bilingualism in the federal government is the primary requisite to the unity of Canada. If there are those in our nation who believe that accessibility to government service in both languages is too much of a problem, then permit me as a Quebec Anglophone to assure those of you who feel that way that you shall soon be presiding over the redrawing of the map of Canada.

The people of Canada recently, through the last election, made a statement. That statement has been interpreted in many ways, more often to suit the needs of the interpreters than to suit the needs and the message of the people. A government today is faced with the obligation of assisting those who need assistance, and giving the widest latitude to those who, not hindered by ill health or economic disaster, can handle their own problems and wish to do so. The programs of this government over the past four years have in many cases been designed to assist those in need. Canadians, I think, are sufficiently charitable and solicitous of their neighbour that they would encourage parliament to provide every opportunity for less fortunate Canadians to overcome obstacles not of their own creation.

The abuse of any program of public assistance must be stopped without delay, lest those without conscience misuse the generosity of the nation. Steps have been taken already to cure such abuse, not by denying our less fortunate citizens the right to our assistance but by ensuring that the few—and there are a very few—cannot abuse the generosity of the Canadian people.

Canadians have also underlined another right, namely the right of every individual to succeed; the right to expect the maximum possible benefits from his work, whether intellectual or physical; the right to assume that aggressiveness in the market place is and remains in Canada a talent to be rewarded by success and material comfort. The problem of government is to assure a sense of moral justice that we, as Canadians, help our less fortunate neighbours in every way possible while at the same time assuring the entrepreneur and the employee that their efforts and ingenuity will result in increasing material comfort.

• (1240)

[Translation]

To assist those who have a moral claim upon all of us, the Speech from the Throne proposes a modified guaranteed annual income to assist the unemployed, the aged, the blind, and the disabled.

[English]

It is of particular gratification, I think, to every member of this House that the elderly, the people who worked to put this country together so that the younger generation might enjoy it and its benefits, shall be further recognized and compensated for their lives of contribution to Canada.