

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot I would like to say, but I know you are going to interrupt me, so I would urge the Government to take action and do so as soon as possible.

● (1805)

Mr. Vincent Della Noce (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on an issue of great interest to me, as it is to the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) who has often mentioned the subject over the past few months when we had the privilege of sitting on the same committee. However I can see now he has just realized that we have official languages in Canada, although he has been here a lot longer than we have. The Liberals have been debating the issue for a long time, but just because we have worked together for a year and a half and discussed the problem it would seem they have come to the conclusion that we Conservatives are dinosaurs. Perhaps they were riding a flying saucer. We could not even see them. Well, some things do seem a lot easier when viewed from the Opposition side, but there was so much work to do that perhaps a few things were left out.

The interest expressed by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier in the two official languages of Canada is shared by quite a few Canadians. One thing for sure is that the matter of official languages is one of the priorities of this Government, as evidenced in the Speech from the Throne delivered earlier this month. In this policy statement the Government did promise to introduce in this session a Bill specifically aimed at ensuring that the Official Languages Act is consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Mr. Speaker, this commitment happens to be a major element of our Government's dedication to national reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, this Government considers that the equality of our two official languages is a basic aspect of our national identity. When we came into office we said we would make sure that the equality of both official languages would be respected both in fact and in law. This is an important commitment and we take it seriously. There is no doubt that Canada's linguistic duality is gaining ever wider recognition. Witness the fact that New Brunswick has become officially bilingual. Witness the fact that Ontario has made a lot of progress with respect to services in French, and the provincial administration expects to push further along this line. We can also see encouraging signs of linguistic co-operation in Quebec. As far as the West is concerned, French immersion for anglophone pupils is increasing at a rate of 15 per cent annually.

All this is very encouraging in terms of national reconciliation. However, there are still challenges to meet. We must strengthen language minority groups faced with the spectre of assimilation. We must also strengthen the Official Languages Act, Mr. Speaker, which has been in existence for seventeen years. Finally, we must find new modes of co-operation among

the various sectors of our society, to promote our two official languages.

Mr. Speaker, as the Secretary of State (Mr. Crombie) mentioned previously in his answer to a question put by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) at an early date during this session intends to propose some important amendments to the Official Languages Act and its application in the case of federal institutions.

I have good reason to believe that the Hon. Member, the House and the entire country will be very pleased with the scope of this renewal of our commitment to Canada's official languages.

● (1810)

[English]

MULTICULTURALISM—CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM COUNCIL—REQUEST FOR RESIGNATION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN. (B) REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to review a question I asked of the Minister of State responsible for multiculturalism last Tuesday during Question Period. My question concerned the leak of the confidential report of one Peter McCreath who happens to be the Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Multiculturalism Council. The confidential report basically admitted without any shame that the Council should be used as a very partisan vehicle and should be committed fully to the Conservative Party of Canada.

On that day, I asked the Minister during Question Period if he would comment on that report and do the honourable thing by asking the Vice-Chairman to relinquish his duties on the Council pending a full review. The Minister's response was that he had neither seen nor read the report. That was fine. I accepted the answer and took it at its face value.

This afternoon, I asked the Minister the same question again. He has had the report for a full week. His Parliamentary Secretary got a copy of that report from me for the Minister. This afternoon, the Minister refused to comment on the document. He refused to put distance between the document and the Government. He refused to suggest that what was said in that report was dead wrong and that he would not have any part in it. Instead, he simply chose to say that he would be meeting with the Council and that I and other members of the standing committee will have that opportunity. That response was completely inadequate.

The Council has been crippled and is hobbling because of statements made by its own Vice-Chairman. No Canadian will take this Council seriously. If the Government feels that the reputation, integrity and credibility of the Council should be restored and if the Council is to play any useful role whatsoever in advancing and enhancing the cause of ethnocultural communities across the country, then the Government has an