

not limited to the province of Quebec and should be reflected across this country.

[English]

—my country, our country, all of Canada, rather than Quebec only. My very esteemed colleague was highly praised by the Hon. Member who now represents the House Leader and who spoke on this same Bill many years ago. He respects the determination of the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier).

[Translation]

I suggest we look back on all the various steps and the mature progression we have always seen in Canada when it is a matter of resolving difficult and controversial problems.

● (1720)

It is fitting to recall that a Bill introduced in 1969 was passed and became law, the Official Languages Act. It is fitting to recall, Mr. Speaker, that Section 2 of this Act was interpreted in 1976, for we know we want to acknowledge the equality of both official languages. There were several events, but it began in 1969.

It is fitting to recall the tragic incident of 1976, the Air Canada dispute, when the court decision did go against the spirit of the Official Languages Act by maintaining that the Act was declaratory, not executory.

Like us Francophones, Mr. Speaker, you too recall the serious problem that decision created throughout Quebec. It was called *l'affaire des gens de l'air*. Nineteen seventy-seven was the year of that dispute.

You can see the determination of our colleague—and this has nothing to do with partisanship, for national survival is at stake—our colleague the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) who, on May 2, 1980, moved first reading of Bill C-203, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act (supremacy of the Act).

On May 23, 1980, an order of reference created the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on the Official Languages. I urge Hon. Members to attend the sittings now and then. I have just begun to do so myself, something new for me, and discovered it is one of the most interesting committees.

When Bill C-214 was moved for second reading on July 15, 1980, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier suggested that this Bill be deferred to the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture. An amendment deferred it instead to the new Special Joint Committee on Official Languages which had been created on May 23, 1980.

We should remember that the Constitutional Act, 1982 was proclaimed on April 17, 1982. This provided linguistic guarantees enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Clause 16(1) repeats almost word for word Clause 2 of the Official Languages Act which enshrined in the Constitution an official

and equal status for French and English at the level of federal institutions.

Official Languages Act

On April 28, 1982—it will be four years ago next Monday, the Joint Committee on Official Languages examined the subject matter of Bill C-214. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier explained the origin of the bill, its purpose and significance. The deputy minister and other officials of the Department of Justice also appeared to explain to committee members the implications of the Bill.

On June 22, 1982, the Special Joint Committee of the Senate on Official Languages tabled its fourth report. One of its recommendations reflected the spirit and letter of Bill C-214 introduced by our colleague, amending the Official Languages Act to confirm its supremacy over the other Acts and Regulations.

In April 1983, three years ago now, the Special Joint Committee tabled its fifth report. The number one recommendation is the same as that of the fourth report tabled on June 22, 1982, on the supremacy of the Official Languages Act.

On December 22, 1983, the Government responded to the recommendations in the fifth report, and I quote: The present Government fully supports the objective of the first recommendation, but intends to carry out an in-depth study of the issue.

On November 9, 1984, the first session of the 33rd Parliament was opened under a new Government headed by the Right Hon. Member for Manicouagan (Mr. Mulroney). Immediately, that is on November 13, 1984, our colleague, who is not a quitter, introduced Bill C-203 which we have before us today, namely an Act to amend the Official Languages Act (supremacy of the the Act), which is similar to Bill C-214 which he had introduced during the 32nd Parliament, two years earlier.

On December 17, 1984, we had the second reading debate on the Bill to amend the Official Languages Act (Supremacy of the Act) introduced by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier.

On April 8, 1986, just ten days ago, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier appeared before the Committee on Private Members Business to defend Bill C-203. However, the Committee did not see fit to give priority to this Bill.

I know that each Prime Minister leaves his own mark on this country. The former Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Mr. Trudeau, did so by giving us the Official Languages Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. We are all aware of the good intentions of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) as concerns official languages. I know this and I am not ashamed to say so even though we sit on opposite sides of the House. I am certain that he would like to leave his own mark on all that has happened since 1969 and I would therefore find it difficult to understand why, at this time, we would not refer the purpose of this Bill to committee for further study as we have done in the past. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex issue. It cannot really be