

*Official Languages Act*

those comments on Quebec, I will try to switch to another subject.

Reverting to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I believe it has to be considered in committee. I don't know if all the proposed amendments make sense, but that is why committees exist, to study the details in depth. As I said, I think this House is supposed to discuss not just the Official Languages Act but also the whole question of bilingualism. As I just said, I feel one of the most ignored points to date has been the refusal by the Province of Ontario to accept bilingualism, I mean official bilingualism, for Ontario; and frankly I am very disappointed by the fact that when the Liberals were in power, neither the then Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, nor his Cabinet, or his Government, were willing to put pressures on the Conservative Government, their good friends in constitutional matters, to make sure that Ontario would accept Section 133 of the British North America Act with respect to bilingualism in Ontario.

To conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave some time for my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria) who wants to make sure that this legislation will be deferred to the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages Policies and Programs for detailed study and, hopefully, get back here in this House for adoption in the near future.

[English]

**Mr. Pierre H. Cadieux (Vaudreuil):** Mr. Speaker, before I start my speech on this particular Bill I want to point out to my colleague on the other side that in my riding in the Province of Quebec there was, during the last election, an NDP candidate, but he was not elected. So they had another choice besides the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Since it is the first time I rise in this House, Mr. Speaker, I will start with a few remarks about my constituency of Vaudreuil. I would like to convey my gratitude to my constituents who put their trust in me as their representative and I am convinced that they will do so again in coming years. But I want to extend my best wishes to my predecessor, Mr. Hal Herbert, who had been the member for Vaudreuil for 12 years.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, we are considering today an important Bill, as can be seen from the explanatory notes, considering that its purpose is to assert the primacy of the Official Languages Act over other acts and regulations of the Parliament and Government of Canada.

While listening to the previous speakers, Mr. Speaker, I could not help but think that the progress they mentioned was the result of years of efforts, compromise and adjustments of all sorts. Since the very beginning of Confederation, section 133 of the Constitutional Act of 1867 provided that the use of either French or English was to be allowed before the Canadian courts and in the proceedings of Parliament. As well, use of both languages was mandatory in legislation, records, reports

and proceedings of this institution. Through the years, we gradually moved towards the Official Languages Act, which was passed in 1969, and more recently the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in which linguistic rights are clearly defined.

Linguistic reform in Canada bears the stamp of historical continuity as was so rightly put by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) in the speech he delivered, on behalf of the Prime Minister of Canada, before the national conference on linguistic services organized by the Secretary of State last October for the 50th anniversary of the Translation Bureau. He recalled that, through the years, there was a slow accumulation of progress and improvements. In 1927, for example, stamps became bilingual; in 1934, the government of Prime Minister Bennett established the Bureau of Translation; in 1936, banknotes became bilingual too. In 1945, the government began to issue family allowances cheques in both languages to Quebec homes. In 1962, the Diefenbaker government generalized that practice, making all financial operations by cheques bilingual. Three years earlier, in 1959, the Diefenbaker government established simultaneous interpretation here in the House of Commons. All that became with time normal practice for Canadians to the extent that we have sometimes the impression that it has always been the case.

This demonstrates, Mr. Speaker, that this long development towards equality between English and French as official languages of Canada was only possible because of the joint efforts of the federal governments which have followed one another since Confederation, thanks to the capacity of Canadians parliamentarians to understand all the complexity of these questions, legislating in this very sensitive area only when all the studies had been made and the time was right, which means when there was a certain consensus among the Canadian people.

After extensive preparations and thanks to the reflexion aroused by the work and the report of the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission, the Official Languages Act which we propose to amend today was in 1969 an important benchmark in this long historical evolution which characterizes the Canadian process. This act, which was passed with the support of all the political parties in the House, extended the principles of bilingualism within the federal administration and emphasized the duties of the departments and other institutions of the federal government in their responsibility to serve the Canadian public in both official languages.

I should like to remind Hon. Members that since the coming into force of the Canadian Charter of Rights, in April 1982, the basic principles of the Official Languages Act are finally entrenched in the Canadian Constitution. The entrenchment of our fundamental linguistic rights into our Canadian Constitution, which again was approved by all political parties is in keeping with the best Canadian tradition of tolerance and civility and that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has