

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Speaker, I therefore put my question to the Prime Minister: When is this Government going to deal with the problems that concern official language minority groups and when can we expect, and I am reading at page 12187 of Hansard, April 14:

—when can we expect some solutions to the problems in Newfoundland regarding access to French in the courts; in Ontario, regarding French television; in Manitoba, regarding services in French, and throughout the province regarding education and Section 23?

Mr. Speaker, we know that the problem in Newfoundland is that two Francophones asked for a French trial, and up to now, they have not been able to get one, because our own Government, through its officials at the Department of Justice, is arguing that Bill C-42, which was passed by this House in 1977 or 1978, was not proclaimed in Newfoundland, and it is a particular section of this Bill that provides one is entitled to be heard by a judge who speaks the same language.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that since that time, a Charter of Rights was adopted by Parliament which I believe recognizes the right of a person to express himself before the Courts in his own language. I asked the question, because if I had known the answer, Mr. Speaker, I would not have asked the Secretary of State for further details.

We know that the Court Challenges Program under which groups authorized to bring questions of national importance before the courts was expanded in September 1985. We know also that today is the anniversary of the proclamation of Clause 15, and all of this put together indicates that the Government, five or six months after the proclamation of Clause 15, has extended the court challenges program to allow target groups who feel their rights have been infringed on either under Clause 15 or Clause 27, to appeal to the courts and defend their interests.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, the whole process has been entrusted to a third party. The Social Planning Council has been instructed to set up a panel to rule on the eligibility of the various claims. So far, no claim has been accepted, as far as I know, because the said committee has not yet ruled on any of these claims. If the Minister's response tonight is that the said Committee has to deal with 20 cases, I will say: Yes, but where are the results?

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are people in Canada who feel that their rights have been infringed on, whether the right to an education, the right to be heard by the courts in their own language, or some other essential and basic right. Therefore, I ask the Minister or the Parliamentary Secretary to tell me when we can expect results concerning the court challenges program issue, more specifically, the rights of the accused to be heard in courts in their own languages?

Mr. Speaker, my other question dealing with the financing of educational television in Ontario is one which I have close at heart—I put everything in my question—and I should like the Minister to tell me when Ontario can expect to receive the few million dollars which it is seeking, and which have been promised, to extend French television programming on the

TVO Network. I have not received any reply to that, Mr. Speaker.

Concerning Clause 23, I have asked just how many cases we could expect would be heard or at least considered, and I have not received any reply there either, because actually, it is not the Government who answered my question, but the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) who stated that the Government was carrying out a full review of the official languages programs, that the task force was supposed to submit its report shortly, and that we would be eventually advised—I do not know when, sometimes in the future—of the amendments which it would recommend.

Mr. Speaker, my question was not about the Official Languages Act. My question was more concerned with language programs and policies. Today again, I tried to make this Government understand that all this hesitating and shilly-shallying . . . we are sick and tired, Mr. Speaker, of being told: It is too complex. It is too contentious, as the Secretary of State (Mr. Bouchard) said. I didn't say it, he did in a press conference or an interview with Canadian Press recently.

He said, and I quote, it may not be word for word, because I don't have the statement in front of me, but I remember clearly the gist of his announcement. He said: It is not wise to proceed too quickly, because this is so contentious and complex and dangerous that we must take a gradual approach.

You know, all this means is *festina lente*, Mr. Speaker. You understand Latin, so you know what *festina lente* means. It means: Make haste slowly.

Mr. Speaker, that is not what we need. We need leadership. We need a Government that has the courage of its convictions and can say: We are going to do something. We are going to start something new, We will provide the necessary leadership, and we will give that leadership to Canadians and we will show by our convictions—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order. I am sorry but the Hon. Member's seven minutes are up.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Mr. Scott).

Mr. Geoff Scott (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question of the hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) who is asking when will the Government do something to help minority groups in the provinces, I think it is obvious that our Government has already done a lot for these groups. Support for minorities is an essential aspect of the over-all policy of the federal Government with respect to the official languages. At the request of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), the Secretary of State (Mr. Bouchard) happens to be reviewing the present policy with his colleagues from Justice and Treasury Board.

In addition, our Government has maintained the \$20 million budget for the official languages communities program. We