

*Official Languages*

these words with respect to language proficiency:

Section 12 of the Act authorizes the Commission to 'prescribe selection standards as to education, knowledge, experience, language, age, residence or any other matters that, in the opinion of the Commission, are necessary or desirable having regard to the nature of the duties to be performed...', in determining 'the basis of assessment of merit in relation to any position or group of positions...' This language proficiency is an element of merit pursuant to the Public Service Employment Act.

On page 46 the commission goes on to say this:

—proficiency in both languages is always a desirable qualification when it is not an essential one when 'ten per cent or more of the public served by the unit have the English language or the French language as their mother tongue—

The Commission's Regulations stipulate that any English-speaking or French-speaking minority group constituting 10% or more of the overall population of a given area justifies provision of service in both official languages.

I am not in any way attempting to impugn the idealism of either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State. I simply say that the facts of life in the world in which we live make it impossible for this legislation to achieve its ends. In fact, I believe this legislation will create the very conditions it seeks to alleviate and will bring about the opposite of that which it is intended to do. It will create in this country a preferred class and discriminate against the majority of Canadians. It will create language reservations which will be force fed behind protective legislative fencing. The result will be that the bill will create outside these fences resentment and animosity. These feelings in turn will create walls and the people inside the language reservations will not be able to break through them. We are setting the clock back. We are imposing immobility on our French speaking population and not providing for mobility. We are raising up an entire new system of internal barriers at the cost of our unity.

May I now return to the specific question of bilingualism in the public service, Mr. Speaker. It has been stated that merit alone will decide who is to enter or who is to be promoted in the government service. The public service regulations nevertheless make it clear that bilingualism is very important in assessing merit. In the 10 per cent areas envisaged under the bill I can see that merit will mean linguistic ability alone. As I have already previously noted, such linguistic ability on the part of our people in Canada is not a self-acquired characteristic. It is an accident of birth. It so happens that our history and

[Mr. Ritchie.]

development as a nation have made sure that the bulk of Canadians born with this linguistic attribute are to be found in our French speaking areas. The facts of history and not the people of this country have dictated that the world of North America shall be overwhelmingly English speaking.

A man's facility in the second language will be a prerequisite for his entry into and promotion within the public service. In most cases the second language facility will become an absolute requirement. This, in turn, gives a lopsided advantage to people of French language background. French language areas will become prime recruiting ground for the public service which will become unbalanced. I submit there will be more French Canadians who speak English than English speaking Canadians who will be proficient in French. This state of affairs, certainly, will not be a fair reflection of Canada or Canadian society. It will be unjust and discriminatory and a poor example of the just society.

We must face the problem of defining bilingualism, Mr. Speaker. What is a bilingual person? I have already quoted the leading government authority on the question, who has said that a truly bilingual person probably does not exist. We must therefore recognize that the degree of a person's bilingualism is hard to measure. It is a volatile variable in our calculations. The degree may vary from day to day, month to month and year to year. The degree of bilingualism will vary as the area in which people work varies. Again, this bill will confer undue advantages on the minority at the expense of the majority. I am very concerned as to the sort of national job the Canadian public service will do if it is forced to depend for recruits largely on French Canada because of the provisions of this bill.

Also, Mr. Speaker, will we not present a schizophrenic face to the world in international affairs? Can a predominantly French oriented public service adequately serve a country that is overwhelmingly English-oriented? The highly respected publisher of *Le Devoir*, Gérard Filion, said recently that Quebec is relatively poor and backward because it has failed to develop its vast natural resources and "Above all, its resources of human talent."

Mr. Blackburn, in the remarks I have already quoted, has noted that even when different groups share the same language, let alone two languages, that is not enough for them to understand each other and communicate adequately. He spoke of Great Britain