

Government Orders

Some say that Quebec has the most racist linguistic policy. Yet, its English-speaking community is growing.

In the 1991 census, 9.2 per cent of Quebecers said that English was their mother tongue, while 11.2 per cent stated that they spoke English at home. Instead of hiding its head in the sand, Canada should look at what is being done in Quebec.

Let us now turn to how the federal government implements its policy on bilingualism in its own Public Service. Take Foreign Affairs, a sector that is crucial when representing Canada abroad and helping business people from Quebec, for instance.

Recent reports released by the department indicated that only 42 per cent of Canadian diplomats were bilingual and that 23 per cent were francophones, of whom more than 95 per cent were bilingual. We can therefore conclude that only 25 per cent of English Canadian diplomats speak French, which is totally unacceptable in their position as representatives of a country that calls itself officially bilingual.

The consequences of the lack of bilingual Canadian representatives abroad are well known. A unilingual francophone client abroad, whether he is a businessman or a citizen in distress, is unable to communicate with about 60 per cent of departmental officers. He cannot read unclassified documents drafted in English only and can only communicate with a minority of the diplomats in Canadian embassies abroad.

With this many of our diplomats being unilingual English, the problem is compounded when the embassy is a small one.

And what impression do foreigners get when they find that the Canadian ambassador, a career diplomat, does not speak French? That Canada is a unilingual, English-speaking country.

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Turning to the Department of National Defence, 48.1 per cent of the total francophone establishment, both civilian and military, is bilingual, while only 6.9 per cent of the anglophone establishment is bilingual. Furthermore, 23.4 per cent of francophones are in English-speaking units and only 1.7 per cent of anglophones are in French-speaking units. There is no good reason for this. What makes these statistics even more depressing today is the closing of the Collège militaire de Saint-Jean. Both departments are, in fact, a microcosm of the situation in the federal Public Service.

In its latest report on the language situation in the federal Public Service, Treasury Board said that in Quebec, to serve a minority group that represents 10 per cent of the population, the federal government had an establishment that was of 52.7 per cent bilingual, or 15,945 positions out of a total of 30,234.

If we apply this ratio to the rest of Canada, the number of bilingual positions should be 30,666 instead of 7,465, which is the case today. So there is a crying need for 23,000 bilingual

positions, which is not being met. After the Yukon, the francophone minority least well served by the federal government is in New Brunswick, where the percentage of francophones is 33 per cent and the percentage of bilingual positions in the federal Public Service is only 39.4 per cent. Applying the same ratio we applied to Quebec, the entire federal Public Service in this province should be bilingual.

It is obvious to me that the view in Ottawa is that a francophone is not worth as much as an anglophone, because when it comes to being served in one's own language, the anglophone gets the service, while the francophone has to speak English. Studies have repeatedly shown that the inability to obtain services in one's own language is a factor that contributes generally to assimilation.

If the federal government really wanted to put the status and use of French and English on an equal footing in this country, it would invest in this principle, in other words, when awarding bursaries for language training, it would give preference to anglophones in Canada with a very poor knowledge of French instead of to francophones, who generally have a fairly good knowledge of English. But no, the Department of Canadian Heritage does the opposite. On page 13 of his report, the official languages commissioner notes that of the 7,301 bursaries awarded in 1992-1993 for summer language courses, 3,150 went to Quebecers. What this program, like many others, is designed to do is anglicize Quebec, not to make Canada bilingual.

Here, I cannot help pointing out the difference in the treatment of the English and French networks of the CBC. While the CBC spends an average of \$18,390 per production hour on its French network, it spends twice that amount, or \$37,496, on its English network, and it does so with the blessing of the federal government, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission.

In this regard, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation continues to be a clear example of what the federal government has in store for French in Canada and of the collusion of Canadian institutions in the implementation of this unequal status.

I could not close this chapter on the failure of 25 years of bilingualism policies without sharing with you some information that appeared in the summer issue of *Language and Society*, a magazine put out by the Commissioner of Official Languages. This particular issue looked at the accessibility of health services in the language of the minority. It contained the following lines: "The government of British Columbia has instituted a program of access to multilingual services. French is not included, however, even though francophones form the fifth largest ethnic group in that province. Language assistance is offered in Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Punjabi, Spanish,