

Official Languages

country. The areas to be designated as bilingual areas will be nothing but language reservations, ghettos, refuges for specially designated Canadians. It means the end of the dream of one nation, with one citizenship and one nationality.

I believe the French speaking people of Canada are beginning to appreciate that this bill will kill for all time their bright dream of a Canada within which they can move freely, speak freely and live freely in their own language and in their own culture. In a country that already suffers from too many boundaries this bill will create a whole new set of frontiers.

I have mentioned several clauses of the bill already. In passing I would direct the attention of hon. members to the provisions of two other clauses, 9 and 10. One creates, without any constitutional or even popular authority, a bilingual national capital region. Aside from everything else, what will this do to the people in the public service?

In introducing this bill on October 17, 1968, the Prime Minister, among other things, said that it should not:

—involve any prejudice to the careers of civil servants who are not bilingual and who have devoted many years of their lives to the public service.

That is a noble sentiment, Mr. Speaker, but whom is he kidding? Careers have already been prejudiced, and many more will be in the wake of legislation such as this if it is passed. Prime Ministerial promises are no great protection. Even regulations and statutes are no great protection if the intent of those applying them runs contrary to their provisions. We have already seen what can happen in the incident of the commissionaires at the National Museum, and it is no isolated incident. We now have unilingual ships in our navy, if we are permitted to refer to a navy any more, and we are to have unilingual army units. No doubt this fashion for unilingualism that seems so popular in the province of Quebec will spread throughout the federal services and departments.

Government spokesmen other than the Prime Minister have given assurances that civil servants will not be prejudiced by this rush toward bilingualism. But, official or not, it is now a strong influence in the hiring and promotion of public servants. I dare say that tomorrow it will be a condition of employment.

As I read clause 10 of the bill regarding bilingualism and the travelling public, it will

mean that airports across the country will be compelled to make bilingualism a condition of employment for everyone working there, from taxi drivers and waitresses to char staff and porters. The absurdity of such a blanket provision will be more obvious in other parts of the country where, if the bill is enacted, jobs will go begging because there will not be enough bilingualists to fill a tenth of them. It may solve the unemployment problem in the province of Quebec but it will do nothing for other regions except breed resentment and trouble.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I said I objected to this bill as being frivolous. I believe it is frivolous because it has absolutely no business being given priority in this chamber over real national problems such as unemployment, inflation, the cost of living and agriculture. I am convinced that we would be doing a far greater and more significant thing for Canadians of French ancestry if we were to take measures to assure them of stable employment, stable prices and stable wages. Whatever the merits of bilingualism and biculturalism may be, they surely cannot hold the urgency that equality of opportunity and equality of economic benefit do for all Canadians in all regions. It is my conviction that this is a bad and inappropriate piece of legislation and that the government should now withdraw it.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The way would then be clear for us to deal with the continuing business of providing the most rewarding and abundant living possible for all Canadians of all tongues and all ethnic backgrounds. I want it made crystal clear that I oppose the principle of this bill and intend to vote against it at all stages. The implementation of this bill will restrict progress in Canada as much or more than occupation by a foreign power.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak at this juncture in the debate for two very specific purposes. My colleague the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) has already dealt with the basic principles underlying this legislation. He has described the purpose of the bill, the ends we seek to achieve by it and the methods proposed in the bill to attain them. I shall not cover that ground in detail again. However, I do wish to deal with the constitutional questions that have been raised in connection with the bill following its introduction by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) last October