

Official Languages

The purpose of the amendment is to make the Board truly national so it will comprise members from across Canada. There should be at least twelve of them. If there are only five, some areas of Canada will not be represented on this Board.

The government, posing as the champion of national unity, from coast to coast, should accept that we stop discussing this question, and on behalf of national unity, that each province, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories be all represented on this Advisory Board. I do not quite understand the attitude of the Secretary of State. I am sure that he must want very much that this Board should reflect Canada faithfully.

So let us appoint no less than 12 commissioners. If we need 15, as suggested earlier by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway, let us appoint 15. Two from Ontario, 2 for Quebec and so on for the other provinces.

According to some hon. members, the problem is related above all to our central provinces, but we say that it relates to all provinces. It was interesting to note this afternoon the interest hon. members were giving to this most important issue of passing the official languages bill.

When all the provinces feel at home, when they have their say in the matter, when a commissioner may express the opinion of the people of his province, I sincerely believe that national unity will be better understood, better implemented, better respected. Eventually, the unity must not be only that of Ontario or Quebec, but also that of British Columbia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Alberta, of all the provinces, of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

I endorse the opinions expressed by my colleagues, this afternoon, as well as those of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway. She spoke as a staunch Canadian. Besides, she is proud to say a few words in good French, in the House of Commons, and I congratulate her. Moreover, she has national unity at heart, on behalf of her province, as we have it at heart, on behalf of our province.

[*English*]

Mr. Ritchie: May I call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to special order made on Friday last, June 13, the sitting of this house stands suspended until seven o'clock.

[*Mr. Caouette.*]

SITTING SUSPENDED

At six o'clock the sitting of the house was suspended.

SITTING RESUMED

The house resumed at 7 p.m.

Mr. Gordon T. Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to say a few words in support of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid). I feel that the government should give serious consideration to accepting the amendment in order to allay the fears and suspicions that the legislation, which is of an administrative nature, might be wrongly administered. I think the matter of bilingual districts on which this board will rule will be one of the most contentious and difficult portions of the bill to administer. I do not believe that the members of the B. and B. Commission were aware of the problems that these bilingual districts will cause, nor do I think that the government has thought very much about this problem.

Bilingual districts must of necessity be mostly in rural areas. I will have a bilingual district in my riding, and having considered the matter I should like to recount some of the problems that will most certainly occur. I feel that if the representation on the board is changed, there might be a better understanding and a better meeting of minds among people in the bilingual districts. In my area there is a provincial riding in which, according to the last census, 28 per cent of the population is French speaking. However, this district could be expanded to include the whole of the federal riding, about three quarters of the population of which would still fall within the 11 per cent requirement for a bilingual district. This means that many residents living as far as 200 miles away, and many ethnic groups speaking other languages than the two main official languages, will fall within the bilingual district.

Many problems are likely to occur. First of all, there is no definition of bilingual districts and much will depend on the interpretation of members of the advisory board. Right within the small area in my riding which will constitute the bilingual district there are people who are neither French nor English but of Ukrainian origin who will be subject to the proposed regulations. These people are already becoming very concerned about who will man the post offices and various federal offices and about whether or not these posi-