

Official Languages

are quite unfamiliar with the circumstances surrounding the languages bill. Again I should like to quote the editorial in the *Western Producer*:

—public misunderstanding and economic worries—the federal government must accept much of the blame. For months, the government failed to explain the need for the language bill and its limited scope.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the ministers who will be responsible for the implementation of this bill and the regulations to be drawn up after its passage to realize there is still a selling job to be done in the west. I am sure there are circumstances in that area completely unknown to the ministers. A situation that is really not improving can still be remedied. The general consensus in the west is that there is an appreciation of the two languages concept. People in the west appreciate the British North America Act and agree there is no reason the young people should not learn two languages. I agree that it is the young people who should learn two languages rather than starting at the top and working downward. This is a point I have made before. If the government is prepared to make the effort there is still time to reach a complete understanding on the languages bill, but to date nothing has been done.

I suggest that if this motion is defeated by the government, we may see a move toward separatism that will be unparalleled. I am sure that no member of this house wants to see that happen. Certainly I would be the last to do anything to incur the disfavour of the people of this nation. We should make all citizens feel they are part of Canada instead of dividing them between east and west.

Personally, I do not think the motion before the house is asking too much. I believe it will give the provinces of British Columbia and Newfoundland representation on the advisory board. Then if a bilingual district is ever created in either province, the representative concerned would be entirely familiar with the circumstances. He would be in a position to know the ins and outs and would have the experience so necessary in establishing a bilingual district under this bill. I can see no reason for members opposing the motion, particularly if they bear in mind that at the moment those two provinces do not have the required percentage necessary to establish a bilingual district. However, in the event that a bilingual district were created in the future, the representatives of the two provinces will be able to do a much more effective job than someone unfamiliar with the circumstances.

[Mr. Skoberg.]

Surely the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid) is not asking all that much that it cannot be approved by the government.

My final words are that if we do want to create a communication gap one way to do so is to leave out two provinces from the ambit of any legislation passed by this house. All legislation passed by the house concerns the people of this nation, and in return for their tax dollars they are entitled to have equal representation on any advisory board that is set up by the government.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, all hon. members know that during the last debate I was in favour of the principle of the bill before us.

But at that time, I had mentioned to the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) that the public should be as much informed as possible on that bill.

When I said that the minister had to inform the public fully on all aspects of the bill before us, I was right, because the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) complained recently that the implications of the official languages bill have not been understood all across Canada. In fact, the previous speaker has just stated that the message has not been construed in the same manner in western Canada.

I know that the members of my party have also made this exception during our discussions on this bill.

I was not very impressed this afternoon by the warnings of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) to the effect that the amendment moved by my colleague had to be defeated.

Indeed if the minister claims that committees are in a position to solve the whole problem, it means that the bill, at the report stage in the house, cannot be amended in any way. In my opinion, this principle expounded by the Minister of Justice is wrong.

True, the role of committees is to consider the legislation submitted to them, to do the research and to obtain the information. But hon. members also have the right, the duty and the responsibility, at the report stage to move amendments in order to improve the bill under consideration.

I wonder why the government rejects the amendment before us. It does not affect at all the principle of the bill, but simply purports to give the provinces responsible for setting up bilingual districts the right to appoint