

*Civil Service Act*

administration. Although the immediate objective sought through this measure is to grant preference to bilingual competitors in civil service examinations, this legislation presents at the same time another very important feature. The provisions of the amendment tend to reaffirm the principle of bilingualism and have it recognized in the federal administration everywhere in Canada. Even if I intend to oppose the measure for reasons which I will explain later in my remarks, I wish to emphasize immediately that I am in full agreement with the principle of bilingualism this measure contains. In other words, the principle as laid down is undoubtedly sound, but the method of its implementation as suggested in this bill, at least in my opinion, is wrong.

The proposition which I have just stated is twofold and I intend to deal with each part separately. In the first place, I have just affirmed my belief in complete bilingualism and in the use of the two official languages of Canada which I believe must be recognized as the normal method to be used in our relations together. It must be accepted as an historical and constitutional reality, and it is also essential to our peaceful and orderly growth as a nation.

Without claiming to be an expert on constitutional matters or on the interpretation of our laws, customs and practices as they now exist, I should like the house to bear with me for a few moments while I try to analyse, as objectively as possible, our position and status as a bilingual country.

Although there are a number of countries where more than one language is officially spoken, it is difficult to determine in each case the extent to which actual constitutional or legal dispositions have given recognition to the use of different languages. In more than one country a spirit of understanding and a growing practice have gone further than precise legal and constitutional definition in establishing the rules of application of this principle. In Switzerland, for instance, where a multiplicity of languages prevails, the constitution itself recognizes four languages as national languages and three as official. But the constitution does not go further than that and leaves it to practice itself to lay down the rules of application of this government policy of equality of languages. As a Swiss jurist recently wrote about the problem of languages in this great united country:

This small neutral country has proved that, given good will, understanding, welfare and loyalty are not only possible among people speaking different languages, but that those languages themselves mean an enrichment of life.

In another country, Belgium, two languages are recognized. But again in so far as languages are concerned in that country, the constitution is very brief and simple. Section 23 of the Belgian code reads as follows:

Use of the languages current in Belgium is optional; it can be regulated only by law, and only for public documents and judicial matters.

That is all the constitution of Belgium says on that matter. In that country also experience has demonstrated that this great people, although speaking two different languages, has always been inspired in peace as well as in war by only one purpose, that of upholding its fine, generous traditions of courage, industry and determination.

I think in Canada the situation is the same. I think that the mere mention of section 133 of the constitution is not enough to determine whether or not this country of ours is a bilingual country. Here also the nature of our constitutional pronouncements, which have been more numerous because of more frequent changes in the constitution itself, is not sufficient to determine the degree of bilingualism which Canadians have accepted and recognized. Here also there has been, and there is, besides such legal and constitutional dispositions, the unwritten law based on usage and practice which has served us in the implementation of that principal of bilingualism which today has become more than ever one of the important governing factors in our development and progress as a nation.

As I have indicated before, the constitutional position in Canada has often been modified with respect to languages; indeed, the constitution itself had to be modified with changing conditions. The situation has changed with the constant demographic, political and economic variations which this country has known in her yet short but dynamic history. In a little more than two centuries Canada, from the status of a French colony and later that of a British possession, has grown gradually and step by step to the full stature of a free and sovereign nation and member of the commonwealth. With these gradual changes in its political status, our country has also experienced, as a result of its great development, very serious changes in both the demographic and economic fields. Our system of government, in order to adapt itself to such important variations and trends, has seen its constitution modified often to meet the challenge of such ever changing conditions.

It is interesting to follow the effect of each of these political changes on the progressive recognition of the principle of bilingualism as it is being accepted now in Canada. At the beginning, under the royal proclamation