

The Address—Mr. Baker

want to underline the fact that the undermining of his department commenced notably the day the former member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton became his executive assistant.

Then I listened to the hon. member for York West (Mr. Fleming) speak about the income stabilization program. I listened to him speak about the pain and cost of it all, and how the selective program, which is really backing into the control program of the government, is so much better. As I heard him extoll the virtues of the government's program and fight against inflation, I was reminded and perhaps the House was reminded of some startling statistics. For instance, the average Canadian worker has lost \$5 a day in the past 12 months in purchasing power, due to inflation. His wages have declined since September and have remained virtually static since last April, in terms of purchasing power.

Food which cost \$15 last year now costs \$17.50. A house which cost \$29,600 last year now costs \$31,680. Clothing which cost \$134.70 last year now costs \$144.80. Canada Savings Bonds purchased in 1972 for \$1,000 now have a purchasing power—and, mind you, this includes accrued interest—of only \$959, a \$41 loss in respect of what is supposed to be a gilt-edged security. The interest on it is taxable, in addition. Sales of Canada Savings Bonds have dropped sharply over the past year.

Here is another litany of failure. In 1972, Canada's annual cost of living increase rate was 5.1 per cent. It is now increasing at the rate of 9.1 per cent. The greatest monument of all was the announcement not too long ago that contributions by employers and employees to the unemployment insurance program had to be increased by 40 per cent—and this does not say how much is coming in from the public sector. Let us not have any comment from the government benches about the pain and cost of an economic stabilization program. Rather, I think we should listen to the Canadian people who pay the cost of what I can only call administrative slothfulness on the part of this government.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I have the honour to represent in this House many people employed as public servants, employed by Crown corporations and agencies and by the armed forces of Canada, as well as their wives and children. I do not like to have to raise this matter, but as a result of the move to identify, and ultimately designate, positions in the public service as bilingual I have received more mail and telephone calls than on any other subject since I came here, including capital punishment. From the tone of these letters and telephone calls it is alarmingly evident that the difficulty of implementation of a policy of bilingualism in the public service that was to be overcome by the guidelines approved by parliament has in fact become more intense and as a result I believe the morale of the public service is being seriously undermined. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the service is being damaged as a result.

The tragedy of this impairment of morale is that it is happening in a service which, to their everlasting credit, has by and large accepted the principles of the Official Languages Act. Like most Canadians, they saw those principles as the instruments by which Canadians would be able to receive and obtain service from the federal

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government in both languages, and on that basis they were prepared to accept that as time went on the service would develop an increasing capability to work or communicate in both languages. It was not intended or expected by any reasonable person that 100 or so years of Canadian history would be changed in the public service or anywhere else in the short period of ten years; it was intended to be a process of evolution.

The difficulties and the anxieties which have been communicated to me arise from two aspects. The first is the mistake of setting a deadline of 1973, in the first place, now substituted by a deadline of 1975 which in terms of the volume of positions is impossible to meet. On top of this impossibility is piled an additional burden. The 1976 deadline was established for an estimate of 25,000 bilingual positions. Now, to everyone's disbelief, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) finds himself to have been about 100 per cent wrong: the true figure is close to 50,000. Once again, the minister finds himself among the growing number of ministers who are 100 per cent wrong.

Mr. Speaker, to find the true measure of the volume that this figure of 50,000 represents we have to consider the number of persons who will go on the courses and fail, and the number who will have to be trained in their places and, as well, the vacancies that will be created by retirements which will also have to be filled. Even if the designated positions amount to less than 50,000, I venture to suggest that the training program will be among the most costly since confederation, and there are grave doubts that its objects can be realized. I suggest that the only way it could possibly be done would be to consciously recruit an abundance of Canadians who were bilingual on entry into the service, or to water down the requirements of proficiency so that a great number of graduates would be no more than statistically bilingual. The one is discriminatory and the other is a flagrant waste of public funds.

The real flaw is the emphasis that this government has chosen to place on the implementation procedures. They have chosen to emphasize the secondary object of the program, namely, communication with the service, to a greater degree than the first object, which is the ability of the public service to communicate in the official languages with the public. With regard to that, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, in the presence of the President of the Treasury Board, that the government has put the cart before the horse. As a result, the pace of implementation has assumed revolutionary proportions. The cost in monetary terms, if the truth is ever ascertained, will be astronomical, and in human terms I suggest it will be beyond measure. Public servants feel themselves compressed into an impossible time-frame. They see careers endangered and they see advancement threatened. This is in fact happening in the public service today.

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The basic and primary intent of the Official Languages Act is being ignored. The grandfather clause, as stated by Mr. Pearson in this House, is being overlooked. Pressure from the Treasury Board—in fact some have described the President of the Treasury Board as the platoon sergeant in this enforced march—have led us to excessive designation in terms of need, and I say with all the force of conviction I can muster that the time has come to recognize and face