

Private Bills

that the French Canadian ministers at the time of the Conservatives, for six years, did not have the courage of the present Minister of Justice to put the record straight?

Mr. Valade: Mackenzie King never said a word of French in 25 years. He never spoke French in the house.

Mr. Dupuis: I have no interest in what you say. I am directing my question to the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm.

Mr. Valade: That is the Liberal party for you. Hypocrisy—

Mr. Pigeon: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to use wounding words about the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville. I wish to congratulate him on his remark, because it is his first since he was appointed Minister without Portfolio—

Mr. Dupuis: Another lie.

Mr. Pigeon: When we were in office we had distinguished ministers who could express themselves in both languages more easily, I think, than the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville.

Mr. Dupuis: The hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm is not answering my question. I am asking him why, in six years, under the Conservative administration, the French Canadian ministers did not show the same courage as the present ministers. The hon. member is not answering my question.

[Text]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): Order. I should point out that we are now on second reading of this bill. If there are some members who would like to ask questions of the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm there will be an opportunity for a reply to be given to those questions when the hon. member closes the debate on second reading.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Rinfret (St. James): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm (Mr. Pigeon) has been a member of the government for six years and he never suggested any positive approach to improve the recruiting of French Canadians for the civil service. In fact, I wish to draw to the attention of the hon. members of the house the fact that the previous government refused to set up a commission on bilingualism in Canada—

Mr. Choquette: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rinfret: We know that the Leader of the Opposition is now persistently reproving the work of the commission on bilingualism.

Mr. Speaker, bilingualism is the characteristic of a country where two languages are spoken and officially recognized. Bilingualism in Canada is a fact arising out of historic circumstances; two linguistic communities have lasted side by side.

The French community has taken root in the soil of North America 350 years ago. Today, descendants of that ethnic group exceed 6 million in Canada, that is 30 per cent of the total population. They have succeeded, in spite of difficulties, in maintaining and developing the integrity of their culture. The English community settled later in Canada and it expanded through immigration from the British Isles.

The English as well as the French communities have rights that are recognized under the confederation pact, which was an agreement between two provinces, but also between the two founding groups. Today, Canadians of good will are trying to find ways and means of developing within the Canadian confederation a partnership of two nationalities sharing equal rights and equal opportunities.

Every Canadian citizen has the right to speak his own language and also the right to be served in his own language by every administrative body in his country.

The Civil Service Act confirms this principle under section 47, as follows:

The number of employees appointed to serve in any department or in any local office of a department who are qualified in the knowledge and use of the English or French language or both shall, in the opinion of the commission, be sufficient to enable the department or local office to perform its functions adequately and to give effective service to the public.

While we are considering this bill, we reiterate the principle of French Canadian representation and we say that this representation is not, at present, what it should be as far as number and appointment to key positions are concerned. Mr. Eugène Thérien, member of the Glassco commission on government organization, gives us some revealing figures. In 1961, out of 5,000 civil servants paid more than \$8,000 a year, there were less than 600 French speaking Canadians—

Mr. Choquette: Shame on the Conservatives.

Mr. Valade: Could you give us figures for previous years under Mackenzie King?