

The difficulty is that the money for paying that bill does not come from the housekeeping budget at 24 Sussex Drive; it comes from the pockets of Canadian taxpayers who are already hard-pressed to meet their regular obligations. Of course, one has to temper one's enthusiasm for the plan with the realization that the bill would not be so high were it not for the breathtaking incompetence of the government. It would not be close to as high if it had not been that the government chose deliberately the cruel course of setting off employment against inflation. This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, the president of one of the chartered banks told a meeting in Toronto that Canada's unemployment rate was the highest in the industrialized world, and he described this as a national shame.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Reilly: When bank presidents begin describing unemployment as a national shame—

An hon. Member: —the Tories had better listen.

Mr. Reilly: —I think we can take it as certain, all things being considered, that it has become a national shame.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, as I said earlier, the Prime Minister attributed racist motives to every member of my caucus. I could scarcely credit the evidence of my senses as I beheld the Prime Minister of my country trying to establish this irresponsible line of argument in his opening speech to this Parliament. When he spoke here yesterday he did a grave disservice to the cause he espoused so earnestly. His grip on reality has grown so tenuous that, although he probably doesn't realize it, there are in this country, in every province and city and town people who will fasten on his unfortunate remarks and fashion from them weapons to use against other people.

There are bigots in this country; some are French-Canadian and others spring from different beginnings. What the Prime Minister ought to know, and if he doesn't know he should be made forcefully aware of it, is that he has encouraged them, all of them. He has made still another of his many contributions to a political situation in which it is already hard enough to be responsive to the legitimate aspirations of your constituents and remain a responsible Canadian.

I represent a riding in which a large proportion of the voters work for the federal government or its agencies. There has been a good deal of speculation by people more expert than I about whether my election was due to the so-called backlash against French-Canadians. The only thing I know is that the only talk of racism during the election came from the Liberal candidate, who accused me of being anti-French because I opposed the government's implementation of the Official Languages Act. The Prime Minister claims he has seen literature of a racist character put out by this party. I can show him literature put out in Ottawa West by Liberals which came close to qualifying as hate literature and which ought to make the party which published it blush with shame.

The National Liberal Federation over on Bank Street sent paid agitators to meetings to make it plain to all the voters of French-Canadian origin that I am not articulate in French. They baited me regularly and persistently

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when I spoke in English, which surely was my right in a bilingual country. The truly sad thing about this is that every time this vicious little cabal opened up on me, they encouraged the bigots, whose support I did not want and whose importunings I regularly turned aside. Not only that, but decent and fair-minded people in the riding were moved to ask themselves some searching questions which might better have been left unasked.

• (2110)

If the Prime Minister wants racism, I can show him racism among the members of his own party, sponsored by his own national office. I happen to believe that my election was not due to any backlash but that it was due in part to the government's wrong-headed and relentlessly-stupid policies regarding the implementation of the Official Languages Act. It is characteristic of this government and its Prime Minister that they are able to equate, without any mental gymnastics at all, opposition to their way of doing things with opposition to the principle of bilingualism per se.

The fact is that after the election, with all the haste that they could decently muster, the government sent the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) scurrying across the street to the national press building with a list of amendments to their program which paralleled in almost every respect the recommendations that I had made on behalf of the public servants in Ottawa West.

If the Prime Minister wants a second and, in his opinion, perhaps a less biased view, he should have recourse to the long article in one of the local newspapers written by my defeated Liberal opponent. Shortly after the election he wrote of his and the defeat of other candidates in this area and said it could be blamed largely on the government's wrong-headed and short-sighted policy in the implementation of the Official Languages Act in the public service.

Despite all their billing and cooing via the electronic letter-writing machine in New York, the Liberals do not have the franchise for love of country. I suspect that every member in this House loves this country, and I imagine, all partisan cracks aside, that all of them decided to run for office because of a true concern about their country and the direction in which it is going. But because some of us differ on precisely how to achieve the objectives of national harmony and unity, it does not do to dismiss us as bigots, or as obstructionists, or as nobodies or, for that matter, as "sinistres farceurs," though I suppose it might be better to be called a sinister joker than to be a sinister joke.

The people who elected me did so because they wanted me to oppose the record of the last four years and to do my best to make certain that we were not in for more of the same. And I propose to do precisely that. I might suggest to my hon. friends in the socialist party that they were elected for the same reason. I shall make no further allusion to what has been described as the marriage between the NDP and the Liberals because I should like, if possible, to block that connubial metaphor before we have any ugly offspring. I simply put it to them that they are betraying the people who voted for them, and I doubt whether the dimensions of that betrayal will ever be brought more sharply into focus than they were this after-