

Official Languages

In the recruitment and training of its members, the Civil Service must reflect the cultural and linguistic values of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians.

I know quite well that it is a rather comprehensive statement, but still it contains a very important principle.

We note that he is trying to stress two ideas, two things: recruitment and training of civil servants.

[*English*]

So until we come to a full realization that we need to establish something like quotas, and pursue these quotas actively, we shall find ourselves snared year after year by the task of trying to work out linguistic equality using means which simply will not work: means, moreover, which will greatly exacerbate feelings on both sides. We were given an indication yesterday by the Prime Minister, that we do not have all the time in the world in which to solve this problem. So let us proceed as quickly as we can to a reconsideration of the whole approach.

In sum, I should like to stress the two main points I have been making. First, the Official Languages Act and the resolution before us are not concerned with national unity but with linguistic justice in the public service. They are also concerned about the ability of Canadians to address their public servants in the language of their choice, a most important consideration. Second, if we wish to bring about bilingualism in Canada we need to search for other methods rather than the correct application of the Official Languages Act.

It is about time we in Ottawa took our heads out of the sand and began to realize that there is a vast country outside the gates in front of Parliament Hill. We had better start talking to the provinces about these matters which concern us, and not assume that the residents of the provinces are not citizens of Canada. Sometimes, in order to make distinctions between governments we begin to split our country up into parts which have nothing to do with reality.

Third, I should like to urge, for the consideration of the House and the government, that in approaching this whole question of language rights in the civil service in the future it is much more practical to seek to establish quotas than merely to designate certain roles in the public service as being bilingual. Such an approach has a far better chance of success.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to participate in this debate on the motion introduced by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on the issue of languages and the unity in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, if we really want to maintain unity in Canada, this Parliament will necessarily have to take sound and positive action to bring about a final settlement of this issue and also achieve the goal which is to give equal opportunities to all Canadians in this country, irrespective of their language, colour, race or religion. Indeed the Canadian Constitution says that all Canadians must be treated on an equal basis.

What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is to implement the constitution. It is not a question of changing it or changing its terms and conditions because I think we have a sound Constitution. It is rather a matter of enforcing it. The time has come when the Constitution must be truly implemented.

Then if the Constitution says that both races and other ethnic groups must be treated on an equal basis that equality must be made quite clear to all Canadians concerned.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to have the Constitution respected in Canada, everyone must be free to speak the language of his choice. That is what the Constitution says by and large and that is what we want, that is what Canadians want. At present, there are shortcomings in that respect.

The Constitution also says that everyone should have the right in Canada to be served and administered in one of the two official languages. That is a principle we must enforce because in Canada, we have ethnic groups who are not dealt with in their own language, and which is not respected as it should. We still have a long way to go in that respect.

Unilingualism cannot prevent a public servant from being promoted to a higher position. Therefore, we must set up, and the Parliament must set up and work out parallel administrations: one French and one English, within the federal departments. That is what is provided for in the Constitution, and that is what Canadians of every nationality are asking for.

And we also require that all departments have two sections: one French and one English. The size of those sections would be according to the respective administrative needs. This means that the departments would not necessarily have the same number of employees, and they would form self-contained units with equal responsibilities up to the deputy minister level. It is at this price, Mr. Speaker, that we will settle that matter once and for all in Canada, and it is at this price that we will provide this unity that our country needs.

Each minister should therefore have one French-speaking and one English-speaking deputy minister, both having the same powers and the same responsibilities.

All the administrative fields coming under the provincial jurisdiction, according to the Constitution, would be turned back to the provincial authorities, provided it is agreed with each particular province. This will reduce to a minimum the number of public servants employed by some departments such as the Department of National Health and Social Welfare. Promotions would be exclusively based on merit in all departments.

As the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) pointed out yesterday, the English and French networks of the CBC are a fairly good example of administration. That corporation has two parallel administrations, well structured and therefore well protected.

The parallel administration we advocate would not be more costly than the expensive integral bilingualism the government is now striving for. In any event, Mr. Speaker, that is the cost we will have to pay to maintain Canadian unity.