

Official Languages Act

great deal of superfluous work that would have to be done to ensure that the strict wording of the Bill was followed.

My Motion No. 2A amends Clause 2, lines two to five. Clause 2(a) would read:

—legislative and other instruments, in the administration of justice and in communicating with or providing services to the public.

This amendment would delete from Clause 2(a) the words “and in carrying out the work of federal institutions”. This amendment would allow the merit system to become intact, allowing hiring and promotion in the Public Service to be done on the basis of qualifications and experience rather than official language spoken. It would also close the floodgates on the interpretation of language of work of federal institutions. As the Bill stands, it is far too open-ended.

The reason we have to give serious consideration to the return of the merit system is because we had a recent case in Vancouver in which a civil servant was in line for a promotion. He was denied promotion because somebody here in Ottawa decided overnight to designate the senior position bilingual. This unilingual English-speaking Canadian was fully qualified for the job. The only way he could get his promotion was to hire lawyers and go to court to fight for his promotion. That is not acceptable to me or to the Canadian people. In this case the judge ruled in his favour. He said that there was no evidence presented that, overnight, this position in Vancouver had to be bilingual. He said it was inexcusable for the Government to be designating this position bilingual overnight. The man has been granted his promotion.

Another concern is that the Government has not responded to that court ruling. We do not know whether more and more unilingual Canadians are going to have to hire lawyers to go to court to get their promotions or not. If this is going to be the procedure from now on, then the Government is going to have to look to providing for compensation for individuals who are going to have to hire lawyers to get a job or to go to court for a promotion.

With my amendment, Motion No. 2B, the clause would read:

—support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities and maintain the use of the English and French languages within Canadian society;

This amendment would state that a purpose of the Act is to “maintain” the use of the English and French languages in Canadian society rather than “generally advance the equality of status and use” of these languages. Purposeful advancement of either language would result in discrimination of one of them. Maintenance of both languages would ensure that both remain a part of Canadian society, but are not waged against each other.

I think that this is an important amendment. For example, there was a recent case involving an Anglophone who was running the post office in Otter Lake for 10 months. She could handle the work in French. She could speak reasonable French but all of a sudden Canada Post decided that it would give this

individual a language diagnostic analysis. It was found out that her French was not perfect. Thus she was fired.

There is a double standard here. I do not want to get into naming the other side. I have never heard of any people on the other side being fired because they cannot speak perfect English.

Even the French-Canadian community in Otter Lake took up her cause. They were out marching on the street trying to convince Canada Post to give her job back. Not everyone can reach level C French and not everyone can reach level C English.

As far as I am concerned, no one should be fired from their job in this country because they cannot speak perfect English or perfect French.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Madam Speaker, a number of amendments have been proposed here. One by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), is aimed at reinforcing Bill C-72 by reinstating wording that was dropped from the Bill during consideration in committee.

The other amendments, Madam Speaker, were approved by members of the Group of Fifteen, the dinosaurs, the Tory backbenchers who objected to the principal contained in Bill C-72. I deeply regret the fact that these Members submitted these amendments, because I believe that the split in the Conservative Caucus has been very damaging, not just to the Progressive Conservative Party but also to our country.

I believe the concept of bilingualism, adopted unanimously in 1969 by all political Parties in this Parliament, is very important and deserves our support. I also think, Madam Speaker, that when a Government introduces this kind of policy, it is entitled at the very least to the support of all its Ministers and parliamentary secretaries, including the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) who just spoke and who is Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Motion No. 2 and Motion No. 2A standing in the name of this Member would have the effect of weakening the Bill's statement of purpose. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, because of time allocation, I will not have a chance to speak to the other amendments proposed by this Member and by his colleagues who are of the same persuasion. However, my point is that all these amendments are not just minor changes or adjustments. They are major changes.

I will give you an example. In the amendment he just moved, the Hon. Member wants to strike out “and in carrying out the work of federal institutions”.

In the present legislation, of which Bill C-72 is an extension, it is clear that the objective is to maintain or enhance or reinforce the use of both official languages, not just when the federal Government communicates with or provides services to