

Official Languages

service. Resentment, fear and frustration have been created in many related areas.

I refer again to my remarks of May 16, 1969. I said that firm and unequivocal assurances had to be given to the employees in the public service and I suggested that such assurances "be written into the act to the fullest extent possible". We have the opportunity to take this step now, Mr. Speaker. The government has brought the matter before the House in the form of a resolution. The government did not choose to take that course back in 1969 and we have seen some unfortunate results as a consequence. We cannot undo the past, but we can take action to make, not necessarily a fresh start but a new leap forward and to express ourselves not simply in the form of an opinion but in doing something in meaningful, legislative terms.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker):

That the motion be amended by adding to paragraph (i) thereof, next after the words, "taking the measures required to give effect to the aforementioned principles", the following:

"and the Government of Canada, as a priority measure, introducing legislation to incorporate the aforementioned principles in the Official Languages Act, the Public Service Employment Act and other appropriate statutes;"

● (2040)

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, we have not had an opportunity to examine this motion on its procedural acceptability.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Reid: I want to enter this caveat on behalf of the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I am sure the hon. member will have an opportunity later to rise on a point of order or a question of privilege.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, may I first say that we will study the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield). I will have to consider exactly what it means. I will want to discuss it with my colleagues. Therefore, I cannot say anything about our attitude toward it at this time.

In a sense, I regret that this resolution has been brought before the House, not for some of the reasons I have heard but for another and perhaps deeper reason. I have learned that in life, particularly in collective life, there are matters with respect to which repeated argument produces confrontation and repeated confrontation pollutes rather than clears the air.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I cannot condemn the government for having brought this to parliament. I remember the discussion a couple of years ago when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) followed up with some guidelines after volume 3 of the B and B report was presented and discussed. The Leader of the Opposition and others demanded that something be done legislatively instead of sending the matter

[Mr. Stanfield.]

to the Department of the Secretary of State, so that parliament could discuss it. I think there was something to that request at that time. I am not being dogmatic about it, because the subject that is before us ought to receive our very careful consideration and we should use carefully considered words. However, from some of the things I have heard, and some of the things I fear I may hear, both in the House and outside I am not certain that it is the wisest step to bring this resolution before the House.

A statement was made by the late Mr. Pearson in 1966 with regard to policies in the public service. That was followed by the adoption of the Official Languages Act, supported by all parties in this House. Some members opposed it, but all parties officially supported it. We had the introduction of new public service suggestions after volume 3 of the B and B report. Commissioner Spicer reported twice to this parliament. There has been a great deal of discussion on the subject across this country.

One of the disturbing things about this kind of delicate, sensitive subject is that instead of discussion producing more understanding and clearing the air, it frequently rejuvenates prejudices and misunderstandings rather than allaying them. That is why I am sorry to some extent that this resolution is now before us. Because of its past, because of what parliament has done, because of what the government has done, because these guidelines were announced by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) in November or December, some weeks before the Speech from the Throne, the government ought to have continued trying to improve as it learned from mistakes made along the way, in the hope that, not overnight but in the course of a few years, the uneasiness and misunderstandings would disappear and we would be on the road to real harmony on the question of linguistic equality in the public service.

That might have been more wise, but the resolution is before us. I hope our discussion will follow the discussion that has taken place thus far. I hope it will follow the reasonable and sincere statement of the Prime Minister this afternoon and the reasonable and equally sincere support of the Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I hope with all my heart that a discussion of this resolution in the House will help, rather than hinder, understanding and national unity in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: That is said to those of us who are Anglophones and uneasy about the steps suggested, and those of us who are Francophones and impatient because the steps are not big enough. If we start that kind of argument we can go on forever and do nothing but harm to linguistic equality in the public service and to unity in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I was pleased that for the first time—I do not think I am exaggerating when I say it is the first time—in the discussion on the subject of bilingualism in Canada, the Prime Minister, by implication at least, admitted that it was not the "be all and end all" of the question of