

*Official Languages*

matter before the house perhaps I might suggest that it would be a good idea to have the television camera in parliament every day if we could create the atmosphere and the high level of attendance we experienced today. Certainly I do not want to detract from the prevailing spirit as we begin to discuss what is regarded by all members of the house as a basic and critical matter to the future development of Canadian nationhood.

Unfortunately, under the new rules one of the problems faced by members during the debate at the report stage is the necessity of submitting amendments well before the matter is discussed in the House of Commons. Those of us who have been around for some years know that under the old rules we became accustomed to the privilege of bringing forward amendments during the course of the actual debate in the house. For that reason I can appreciate the comment Your Honour made that the amendment I propose to clause 12 of Bill C-120 may trespass upon areas of responsibility which devolve almost exclusively upon the provincial governments in Canada.

I have been giving some thought to this matter and I am reminded that last week in Ottawa there began a series of important discussions on the relationship between the federal and provincial governments in areas of joint responsibility. As I understand from what news has become available about those discussions, up to the present moment there has been a considerable degree of progress in respect of the distribution of responsibility as between the federal and provincial governments, particularly in fiscal areas where the problem of joint responsibility overlaps on spending programs.

The point I am trying to emphasize in the amendment gives the provincial governments an important say in decisions regarding bilingual districts in Canada. I hope that it will also be a subject for discussion at the continuing conference between the provincial premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada. I understand there is to be a document produced by the Prime Minister in due course in respect of this matter which may clarify the issue, certainly so far as fiscal matters are concerned.

If we are to draw any conclusions at all from the statement of the Premier of Ontario about the agreement which has now been reached on the question of medicare, there is

now a clearcut pattern established as to respective areas of responsibility in joint programs. The Premier of Ontario has summed up the situation in a significant phrase, that he anticipated that with the changing emphasis on federal-provincial responsibility there will be no more medicare fiascos of this kind. Unfortunately, the misunderstanding has unnecessarily delayed their implementation of this important program for people in certain provinces.

• (3:10 p.m.)

In respect of this amendment, what I had in mind was the spirit that operated to a magnificent degree last week when the Premier of Ontario and the Premier of Quebec were able to agree upon an entente cordiale which will go a long way toward solving the problems of bilingualism and biculturalism in their respective spheres of influence. This is the sort of spirit I would like to see prevail among all provincial governments because this entente cordiale, arrived at by mutual agreement of the provinces concerned, will, I believe, ultimately reduce the tensions which exist within the body politic of Canada. These tensions are always present because we are a geographically large and an ethnically, culturally and economically diverse nation.

I should like to point out in passing that this spirit also prevails in other provinces. In 1966 the province of Manitoba, of its own accord and without any legislative coercion from Ottawa, took the initiative of providing educational services in areas of substantial minority groupings. This does not only apply to French speaking areas; certain privileges have been accorded to areas of other cultural predominance because of the nature of the mosaic which exists in western Canada.

I am not a lawyer, and I was going to obtain a legal opinion from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) in this respect, but he can read *Hansard* and see what I have in mind in this regard. It would seem to me there is general agreement that l'esprit de la loi is much more important than the letter of the law with regard to linguistic and cultural rights. One of the reasons there has been so much controversy in certain areas of Canada is the overtones of compulsion which inevitably arise from Bill C-120. This is of special concern to western Canada and other provinces of similar cultural make-up wherein many minorities are involved.