

*Official Languages*

[English]

I made this point before. I said at the beginning of my remarks that it was necessary to repeat, so I will make the point again. Even with proper and total discussion of this act, and proper and total application of the rules, or even amending to the best possible extent all the items coming under this act, we will not solve the problem that is facing our nation.

Two centuries ago the famous author, Jonathan Swift, wrote a book entitled "Gulliver's Travels." In the third volume of that book he described the island of Laputa. I recommend the reading of that book by hon. members. On the island of Laputa there were some disinterested, extremely rational beings who debated at great length, in the most logical fashion, what they thought was the order of reality. However, these beings, who were supposed to be the rulers or governors of the country below, were floating out of sight and out of mind. This is why I stress the importance of the related issue before us. This is why I ask members of the government as well as the other members of this House to reconsider certain policies or lack of policy.

I ask the members of the government, particularly those who have to deal with post-secondary financing, to address themselves to the problem of second language requirement for university entrance. After all, this used to exist universally in Canada some ten years ago and it should be possible for the federal authorities, sitting in consultation with the provincial authorities and in confrontation—I use that word advisedly—with the university authorities in this country to say to them, "we wish to restore this requirement. We wish to see inscribed in the rules for admission to our universities the fact that a student should be able to present evidence of achievement in a second language."

I am not even going to suggest a specific language. Let us just leave it at a second language. I believe—indeed, I happen to know—that in English Canada the second language for most students would be French. They are not fools. They know the importance of French in this country. They know the value and importance of the French language in literature and history. They will choose French. However, if you insist that they choose French you will run into the impossible argument of somebody saying, "Why not Italian?"—and you will spend the next ten years discussing that; the country will have run another ten years toward the other place I referred to a while ago.

When the ministers of this government who are in charge of the policies that have to do with the provision of funds to the provinces for the encouragement of bilingualism—and we have been spending quite a bit of money in this area over the past couple of years, and propose to spend more—consult the provinces, they should insist that these moneys indeed go for the purposes of furthering bilingualism, innovation in teaching the second language, and not simply for the purpose of supporting programs which already exist. Otherwise we will have figures like the ones I am now going to quote back to haunt us every year.

In Ontario, in 1970-71, out of the total number of students enrolled in high schools and capable of studying

[Mr. Harney.]

French, 47.5 per cent were studying French. I do not mean studying French in every year of high school. These figures tell us they studied it once, took one course. This figure of 47.5 per cent is good compared to the figure for 1972-73: it has now dropped to 39.4 per cent. What we are looking at here is part of an accelerated downward progression.

If I cannot get my point across by quoting figures, perhaps I can symbolize it by referring to something which has struck me over the years. We live in a bilingual country. One institution in this country is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It has two parts: in English Canada we know it as the CBC, and in French Canada as Radio Canada. I have admired and respected this corporation over the years, but one thing that burns me is the simple fact that on the news programs even the most highly qualified announcers can rarely pronounce a French Canadian name correctly.

It may seem like a small point, but I have seen the CBC pay a lot of attention to the accurate pronunciation of names of people from very far away. I have admired them. I could never pronounce those names accurately. I say to myself that somebody must be doing research. More important, there is somebody who is concerned. However, when I listen to the horrible mangling of names of people who live in this country, I say to myself that there cannot be anybody there who is concerned. You can have theoretical concern, but if it has no practical consequence you might as well not have it. I do not mean to single out the CBC for criticism; I just use them to underline a point.

I will end this part of my remarks with a brief quotation from the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages. He states in his report:

• (1520)

From our observation post we definitely do not have the impression that the cause of bilingualism is advancing with giant steps.

The statement drips with irony. It is a very serious accusation. How can we advance the progress of biculturalism or language equality, in the civil service at least? I began my remarks by dealing specifically with the resolution before us and advancing some considerations which should be brought to its application. A while ago I was thinking about the important difference between equality of opportunity and equality of condition. I happen to believe we shall only achieve language equality in the civil service when we adopt the second statement, equality of condition, as our fundamental working premise. The first speaker for the Social Credit party said the principle ought to be "celle de la participation."

[Translation]

—that of participation. As I stated two weeks ago, I disagree with the policy which he specifically advocates, but I recognize the importance of the principle he lends to that policy which is the following. As long as we do not give full support to the idea of participation which will make us concentrate on recruitment, we will never attain linguistic equality in the Civil Service.

I would like to recall, Mr. Speaker, the promise made by the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson in 1966 and I quote: