

*Civil Service Act*

I shall mention only the case of the stenographers and typists who must be bilingual if they are French-speaking, but who receive the same salary as their English-speaking fellow workers who are not bilingual. The bill would recognize the merit of our English-speaking fellow citizens who have learned French, and would do away with such discrimination.

I could quote innumerable instances of injustices done our compatriots, who have been told and repeatedly that they should learn English to be promoted.

Hundreds and hundreds of instances show with a pitiable truthfulness that the French language is treated as a poor relation, not only in business but more particularly here in the government, which was set up by the constitution as the guardian of the infeasible rights of the two racial groups.

Even in this house, the French language is looked upon as a poor relation, for even though according to the letter of the law it enjoys the same privilege as the other language, in practice it is but rarely spoken and those who use it are sure not to be understood by the majority of the representatives of our bilingual country.

Those who are primarily responsible for that anomaly, although I do not wish to accuse anyone, are the French-speaking Canadians themselves, because they seldom speak French in the house during the debates.

An English-speaking colleague recently told me that he took exception to French-speaking members always speaking English, thus depriving the English-speaking members of the opportunity of learning our language.

I particularly blame the French-speaking ministers who, except for the Speaker, speak French only when they reply to a question from a Quebec member, but never do so in their official statements. They will perhaps reply to that serious accusation that they do so because it is the only way to be understood.

Every time our French-speaking ministers use that good excuse for not speaking their own tongue, our English-speaking colleagues will surely contend that they do not need to learn our language.

In all governmental agencies, and more particularly the Canadian National, with the possible exception perhaps of the St. Lawrence seaway authority as far as its cheques are concerned, the French language is treated as a poor relation.

My hon. colleague, the member for Beauce (Mr. Poulin), embodied in a bill the magnificent principle he has upheld for years in order to obtain bilingual cheques. We have here another proof that French is treated as

a poor relation in a manner which cannot be explained. We have come to the point where we must submit bills to have our most elementary rights respected. And this happens in a country which boasts of promoting unity, peace and concord among foreign nations.

Every time the French-speaking people ask that some of their prerogatives be respected, they are told, as was done for the flag and other similar matters, that they should proceed step by step, that we must not wound the feelings of others, that something has been gained here or there and so forth. By acting thus we again admit that the French people are really treated as poor relations, that their rights have never been truly recognized throughout the nation, but are granted small parcels of those rights with a measuring cup, by the side door, and as a result of persistent struggles.

If the confederation pact had intended to give to the French language the status of a poor relation, the fathers of confederation would never have agreed to it; besides, if that were the case, the constitution would have been drafted otherwise. There is one section only of the British North America Act which mentions languages, and it is section 133, which reads as follows:

Either the English or the French language may be used by any person in the debates of the Houses of Parliament of Canada and of the Houses of the Legislature of Quebec; and both those languages shall be used in the respective records and journals of those houses.

A list is then given of the official records which must be bilingual.

Therefore, both languages are on equal footing. If the intention had been to rank the French language below the English language, instead of saying "Either the English or the French language may be used", it would have been stated that "French may be used". On the contrary, the text is clear: "Either the English or the French language . . .".

The remainder of that section deals with compulsory bilingualism in official documents. Commenting on a speech I made last year on bilingualism, the *Star Weekly*, in its edition of February 19, 1955, contended that there is nothing in the constitution to indicate that both languages are on an equal footing. According to the writer, one of the two languages enjoys a privileged status. Under what section of the constitution? I should like to know, since the only reference to languages which may be employed applies equally to French and English.