

servants. The government has done precious little to encourage a positive attitude by addressing itself to explaining the implementation of the program. The way in which the government has proceeded with its language training program in the public service has also contributed to frustration. A survey of drop-outs established that at least two-thirds of them had been forced to discontinue their training because it conflicted with their regular workload. It is true that many have complained about the unrealistic administrative policy of the government with regard to the program of bilingualism in the public service, but this must not be construed as opposition to the principles of bilingualism in the public service.

● (2030)

I think that language training programs must be closely examined. The practice of pulling senior civil servants away from language training to take care of departmental duties has been costly and has weakened the program. Too many language students have failed to achieve any measure of competence, regardless of personal effort. Leaving language training to attend to departmental matters and then returning, only to find one has fallen far behind, has discouraged a number of eager people.

There is also the question of selection of candidates for language training. Many feel they are being discriminated against because they have been refused the opportunity to become bilingual. I realize that all these things cannot be corrected overnight, but they are things we ought to talk about. The government, in all seriousness, must make language training available to those who want it. Many well disposed civil servants have been frustrated by the government's failure to give them a fair chance to compete professionally through wider access to language training. The government must assist its own employees who may need another language to advance their careers. Many find this lack of opportunity a great threat.

What is the best service the government can render at this point in time to the program of bilingualism in the public service? What are the priority actions? Certainly, Sir, the program of bilingualism in the public service, and of institutional bilingualism in the country generally, needs public support.

An hon. Member: And you are so helpful.

Mr. Stanfield: I beg your pardon? The program needs public support. In a national sense the government must respond effectively to Mr. Spicer's criticism regarding lack of explanation: it must act to close "the deep and perilous information gap". Within the public service it must undertake an immersion course itself, a full immersion course in consultation. It must certainly listen and be prepared to listen, and it should act to give the force of law to the assurances and guarantees in the resolution before us. We feel that the nine points of the resolution deserve more than a simple affirmation by this House. They have been generally well received by those best equipped to judge.

Mr. L. W. Barnes, the executive director of the Professional Institute of Canada, the certified bargaining agent for 38 professional groups in the public service, has said that the guidelines represent a "great improvement". He also said that they remove the fears and doubts of many

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public servants and that they provide clarification about the implementation of bilingualism policies. Mr. Barnes noted that these new guidelines match the objectives of the institute's policy on bilingualism.

Mr. Claude Edwards, president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, said the association was favourable to the guidelines, which met most of the objectives of the Public Service Alliance, particularly as regards long service and unilingual public servants. He cautioned, however, that much depends on the way in which they are implemented and on good faith on both sides. Both these staff associations, the main bargaining agents for federal public servants, are involved in the National Joint Council which is engaged in continuous consultation with the Public Service Commission on the designation of bilingual positions. Spokesmen for both groups stress implementation as the key to the success or failure of the guidelines.

I believe that a growing number of public servants should have the opportunity to speak both our official languages. As far as I am concerned, there should be a system of incentives to this end. But, of course, there should be no attempt to force people and I would not support or permit any attempt to stop short the careers of men and women of either language because of lack of fluency in the other.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Sir, I urge all hon. members to consider the case for the amendment to be put forward and I ask for their support. If it is said that these guidelines have to be, and should be flexible, and that they have to be subject to change, why are we being asked to endorse them in this House? We could incorporate them in legislation and still change them from time to time, if it seemed necessary. If the amendment is lost—I want to emphasize this—if the House does not accept my amendment, I want to make it perfectly clear that I will support the resolution as it stands.

I have been a supporter of this program. I believe we will best serve the program if we discuss these problems frankly and openly, as I have tried to do, and concentrate on methods to improve the program. As far as my amendment is concerned, I urge it upon the House. I think it would be an appropriate step to take. Nevertheless, I will support the resolution as it stands. I will not play all or nothing here, Sir; there is too much at stake in terms of morale in the public service and there is too much at stake in the broader terms of national unity.

I will not allow my position regarding the content of the resolution to be in any way misunderstood. I support the content, Sir. I certainly want the public service of this country to be attractive to French-speaking Canadians in every sense of the word. I want it to be attractive to French-speaking Canadians as well as to English-speaking Canadians. I think that is essential for national unity and essential for the country. In saying this I emphasize that my support for the resolution is in no way a vote of confidence with regard to the government's actions in this area. In putting forward the motion in the way that it has, it seems to me the government is trying to distract from its own failures and mistakes. These failures and mistakes are not limited to the matter of bilingualism in the public