

*Official Languages*

I would not want to use the same terms as were used by hon. members opposite in an attempt to blame some western members who expressed their fears and their concern with regard to the administration of this measure.

On the contrary, I think these people wish to be of service to their people and they want to express the views of their fellow-citizens in the house. However, I do not want to suggest that I share entirely their views, but at least I give them the benefit of the doubt, namely that they are doing their best to express the opinion of their constituents.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this bill has led to all kinds of interpretations. Some have said: It is intended to impose bilingualism all across Canada, to force us to learn a second language, to force our children to learn a language which is not theirs. There are no such things in the measure now under consideration. All it intends to do, as I have said before, is to ensure a bilingual service within the government departments and the courts of justice.

Some even went as far as to suggest that there was a danger of domination on the part of Quebec over the rest of Canada. I immediately deny such a claim and I note that even though Quebec might want to dominate the rest of Canada, it would be physically impossible.

It is too bad some government members chose to speak the way they did during this debate. It is obvious they are seeking to provoke the members of the opposition, hoping to hear statements they could use as they see fit in their riding or at the next elections.

Some accused us of being against bilingualism and even evolution of the French fact. Some of my colleagues were accused of being hostile to the advancement of French culture in this country. Far from being opposed to a greater use of the French language in the country, we, as members of the opposition, want to do our best so that French Canadians will be at ease in the national capital as well as in all other cities and places where there is a sufficient number of French-speaking Canadians to deserve an adequate attention from the government.

Let us see, Mr. Speaker, what has been the attitude of my party towards a more extensive use of French. When I first came here in 1957, it was striking to see how very little French was used on parliament hill and in government buildings. Posters and signs on the doors of ministers' office were solely unilingual and not in French.

I then made a survey of the various anomalies which could be found here and there and I discussed them with the Speaker at that time, the Hon. Roland Michener. I discussed the matter also with several ministers and from then on, we started seeing bilingual signs and posters in the house of commons as well as on parliament hill.

It is a well known fact that the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm at that time, Mr. Breton, introduced, session after session, private bills to have simultaneous interpretation and bilingual cheques accepted by his Liberal colleagues. And we should be surprised, to meet the views of our friends opposite, to find that at the time, those requests made by a representative of the province of Quebec were either killed or rejected by a Liberal government. And today, those people are trying to blame us and to make people believe that we are opposed to the French language.

Who gave this house simultaneous interpretation, if not the Conservative government which preceded that of Lester B. Pearson?

It was the same government, that also agreed to have the "Parliamentary rules and forms" by Beauchesne translated and had it done; up till then it had always been published in English.

It is also the government headed by the right hon. John Diefenbaker that granted bilingual cheques and allowed the election briefs to be published both in English and in French.

It is the same government that elected a French Canadian as Governor General of Canada and that reached an agreement with the government of the Quebec province for the building of the transcanadian highway.

It is the Conservative government that also settled the matter of the subsidies granted to the universities of the province of Quebec, which, under a Liberal government, had been left pending for many many years. It was also this government that reached an agreement with the Ontario and Quebec provinces for the building of the interprovincial bridge which we may admire not very far from here.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to draw the attention of the house on the steps taken by our leader and on the statements he made about the French language. And those statements were not just made today.