

Official Languages

they constitute a sizeable proportion of the population. Still another solution that lends itself ideally to situations in western Canada would be to officially recognize the languages of leading language groups as regional languages.

There is also another area which should be discussed here briefly. While the bilingualization of the civil service is understandable and desirable in order that the citizens of Canada may be served in either official language, there is a danger in this process being pushed to the extreme. If the aim of bilingualization of the civil service is to enable the citizens, in their dealings with government, governmental institutions and crown corporations to communicate in either one of the two official languages, it is not necessary to require that each and every member of the civil service should be proficient in both languages. The knowledge of both languages should not be a prerequisite in every case for serving Canada at home or abroad. There should be no valid reason why the civil service should not accept a unilingual (French or English) applicant with exceptional talents, or those who have a knowledge of one official language and one or two other. Surely, a knowledge of some Slavic languages would be a decided advantage in trade and diplomatic missions to central and south eastern Europe, or the knowledge of Italian, Portuguese and Spanish in dealings with Latin countries.

If the language rights guaranteed 100 years ago need to be amended, Mr. Speaker, should we not in our amendment include English, French, and the languages of other ethnic groups across the country? Yet nothing like that has been done.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I point out that not only have I expressed my own doubts about the bill but I have also expressed the reservations of responsible leaders of ethnic groups and associations in Canada. I have put those views on the record. In considering this legislation surely the government should have heeded the viewpoint expressed by various ethnic leaders and given expression to these viewpoints in the clauses of the bill, thus making this bill acceptable to all concerned. Of course, if the government is determined to push this bill through, and because of its majority we cannot stop it, one can only say that the people of Canada do not want to have this measure forced upon them. The bill is ill-conceived and has dangerous ramifications that could divide this country to the point of no return.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Mr. H. A. Moore (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, before saying why I object to this bill may I say this. No one is opposing this bill because of any desire to suppress the French language, or any other language in Canada for that matter. The rights of any group to any

[Mr. Skoreyko.]

language or culture should not be curtailed. In the western half of Canada, as in some other areas, Mr. Speaker, we do not feel any responsibility for or involvement in the old squabbles between the French and English in Canada. The fact that we speak English does not make us English Canadians. Most of us have neither French nor English blood in our veins. Many of us have studied French in school; some of us even became fairly proficient in it. On leaving school we immediately forgot most of it since there was no further contact with the language. Our mother tongue being English, regardless of our racial origin, we used the language of our area and had no reason to make an effort to retain any proficiency in French. Now, we are faced with a bill that might not say much but has ominous implications for us. The federal government will not employ people who speak only English. What does this mean? It means that only people from central Canada, who have been exposed to both languages from childhood, will get the jobs. We who always thought we were Canadians, and many who were willing to fight for Canada, find we still have the privilege of paying the taxes which pay the salaries of the privileged Canadians who, because of their ability to speak French, are eligible for the Civil Service.

What about those who are only English speaking and are employed in the federal Civil Service, especially in Ottawa? Their chances of advancement are nil. This situation, unfair as it seems to us, is by this bill to be carried into the armed forces and possibly to the R.C.M.P. Then, of course, there is the 7 per cent wage bonus for the fortunate. Is it any wonder we are concerned? There appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* of Wednesday, May 21, the headline, "Merit Reinstated for Promotion in Public Service". What an admission! What a hope! This bill in no way makes provision for the merit system to be applicable to civil servants. I doubt this statement will change anything for the better. It in no way guarantees any rights to English speaking Canadians.

The question of language rights on a national scale is just a small part of a much larger question. That question is whether it is reasonable to expect that mere legislation can halt, let alone reverse, the tide of natural social evolution. I believe this is what we are seeking to do in this legislation and in other measures in the same area which may be brought forward at a later date for enactment. The aim of this bill supposedly is to