

*Official Languages*

was made clear by the minister this morning, but I think it must be stressed again. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said that we must do everything to clarify the principle of the bill. I have been trying to do that, and so have many members of this party. I hope that all members of this house, when they speak about this bill in their constituencies, will stress the point that this bill does not seek to impose the French language on English speaking people or the English language on French speaking people.

**Mr. Forrestall:** Is that the principle?

**Mr. Allmand:** The principle of the bill is to provide services in federal institutions for both the French and English speaking people in this country, wherever they may be in sufficient number. The principle is not to force people in mainly English speaking parts of Canada to speak French but rather to provide services in governmental institutions at the federal government level so that French or English speaking persons who approach such an agency or Crown corporation may speak with someone in their own language. What this might mean is that in an area of Ontario where there is a certain number of French speaking people there will be enough sales people and information people at a post office, a C.N.R. office or an Air Canada office to deal with requests for tickets and information in either the French or English language.

The same will hold true in a place such as Chicoutimi or the lower St. Lawrence or other parts of Quebec in relation to the English speaking people. In these areas the English speaking people who are in the minority should have the right, if there are enough of them, to go to these federal government offices and obtain service in their own language. This is all that the bill attempts to do. It says that the institutions in Canada under the federal government must be so established that the French and English speaking people of Canada can obtain service from the federal government in their own language. This does not mean that everybody in that office must speak both languages. It just means that there should be a sufficient number of employees in the office to deal with the public in the language that the public wishes to speak. In some areas this might mean that one out of ten persons must speak French or that one out of twelve must speak English.

I should like to speak now about some of the objections that have been or might be raised against this bill. The Leader of the Conservative party said there was concern about the administration of this bill. He said that he supported the principle of the bill but that injustice could be done if it were not administered properly. I think we all agree with that. Of course, the best of laws can be administered improperly and thus bring about injustice. I think the minister and all the members on this side of the house would agree that if the situation is to be improved, there must be a proper administration of the provisions of this bill. There is no real division of opinion on that.

Members of the opposition parties who spoke also raised the complaint and the fear that perhaps people who are unilingual in Canada—I think they were referring to unilingual English speaking people—might not be able to have a full career in the civil service or in some Crown corporation. It is my feeling that there is provision for that in the bill. I do not believe that any person who speaks only English will be prevented from having a career in the civil service or in a Crown corporation because there is no requirement that everybody must speak French and English. However, there is an implication in this argument with which I think I should deal. It should be made clear that for many years, whereas a person who could speak only English could join any Crown corporation or any government department and, advance without any difficulty, the person who spoke only French had to learn English to do so. I think it should be a two way street. I am not saying that everyone should be bilingual. I think that in some parts of Canada unilingual people can serve well in the civil service. However, I think that the people who make the accusation that we are forcing English speaking people to learn French if they wish to advance in the civil service should remember that we have been doing that for years to the French speaking people.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that it is not easy to learn two languages. I agree with him; I had to start learning French at the age of 25 and it was extremely difficult. But, as I pointed out, it can be done, and when it is accomplished there is a great sense of satisfaction and a great gain.

The Leader of the New Democratic party and the Leader of the Conservative party