

Official Languages Act

is a power struggle. It is a grab for the bureaucracy of Canada from one end to the other, to control this great nation.

Every company name that is not in French must be changed before December 31. What happened when Mr. Bourassa said that he might change Bill 101? On April 17, 25,000 marched for French in Québec. Did they say anything about bilingualism then? Is there anyone fighting for 800,000 Anglophones in the Province of Québec?

This is a Draconian Bill. It will change the face of Canada. All I can say to my English speaking colleagues who believe in their heritage and have any thought about this nation ever progressing, is, stop this Bill. Let us take bilingualism where it belongs, from the schools up. Give bilingualism to our children, do not force it down their throats.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I have reviewed the points brought out by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary with respect to the amendment presented by the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault). I found the points to be arguments for debate but not reasons to declare the amendment unacceptable. Therefore, we will continue debate on the amendment of the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques.

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to say something at report stage of Bill C-72. I am particularly pleased to have an opportunity to speak to amendments which deal with both sides of the issue, designed to strengthen the Bill, and amendments designed to weaken the Bill and strike at the very constitutional principle of equality between English and French in our national life.

It is particularly important to make such comments immediately after the observations made by the Hon. Member for Simcoe South (Mr. Stewart). He has attempted to make an emotional appeal to colleagues particularly in the government caucus in order to stir up fears and appeal to rather base emotions. It is even more necessary to consider the importance of our policy of official bilingualism and discuss what happened in the legislative committee dealing with this Bill.

After the constitutional activities of the early 1980s, the passage of a Bill to consolidate the laws of Canada is something that has faced Governments since 1983. It has fallen on the present Conservative Government to take up the work.

We who served on the joint standing committee waited many months wondering whether we would receive a Bill that would effectively renew the policy of official bilingualism to which Canada committed itself in 1969. Bill C-72 was tabled in the House over a year ago. Late this winter it came to second reading debate and finally to a vote. When the question was finally put at second reading stage, there was no vote against Bill C-72. This is noteworthy considering the later activity which took place in the legislative committee and which comes to us now at report stage of the Bill. We know that the vote at second reading is the vital point at which the House of Commons indicates its acceptance of the principle of

the Bill. Those who are opposed to it should stand at that time and indicate their opposition, as the opposition Parties often do. However, there was no vote against the Bill and it passed with the appearance of unanimous support in the House and sent to a legislative committee.

The committee spent many hours with Ministers and officials in various Departments considering carefully what witnesses had to say about the Bill. We then proceeded to careful consideration of the successive clauses of the Bill.

The Member for Winnipeg—Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) said that witnesses were denied the opportunity to be heard. It is true that all of those persons who might have wanted to attack the basic principle of the Bill were not heard.

I know that there are western Canadians who oppose official bilingualism. I grew up in the West and taught university students there. I know their feelings very well. Some of the western Canadian representatives who could have spoken to that Bill failed to appear. When the legislative committee saw that the first ones given the opportunity were not prepared to come here and spell out their opposition and become involved in debate with committee members, the committee decided to take up clause by clause consideration in view of the support of the House at second reading.

Motion No. 1A moved by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), is designed to reinsert in the Bill language that was there when it was given second reading. An official from the Department of Justice stated strongly that this language was essential to the Bill as an indication to the official language minorities in Canada.

The language of "extend" in English and "*renforcer*" in French was removed from the Bill after a proposal late on a Tuesday night that was carried through the following afternoon.

The Member for Simcoe South (Mr. Stewart) should carefully consider the fact that the official from the Department of Justice was saying that the English-speaking minority in the Province of Quebec had been given the promise by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) that the language in Bill C-72 would extend the laws of Canada relating to language. I suggest that the French-speaking minority outside Quebec had an equal interest in this assertion.

Those are the best of reasons for recognizing the politics of the matter and for respecting the importance of the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier.

It seemed clear that this was the last attempt to get the Conservative Members of the legislative committee on side, in support of the Bill. If this language were dropped and the final compromise made, the Bill could be reported back to the House and passed. However, it is because of the failure of that attempt and the appearance of all of these amendments that we have this unusual situation now, with opposition Parties and a vast majority of the Government fully in support while