

there is risk that rising public dissatisfaction and misunderstanding will lead to rejection of the policy as a whole with irreparable damage to the principles of linguistic equality in federal institutions.

One purpose of the review should be to make clear to Canadians the cost and benefits of official languages policy and activities and explain far more clearly its goals and methods. Such a review should evaluate public information efforts as well as investigate all of the public's expressed concerns.

This recommendation, like all the others contained in the \$25 million document, was ignored by the government of the day, just as the Liberals continue to ignore the views of the thousands of Canadians who took part in this process. Despite this lack of government attention to the concerns expressed by Canadians, that recommendation is as valid today as it was in June 1991.

The people intimately involved with the act, the commissioners, say the act is not working as it should.

• (1330)

Other noted Canadians share this sentiment. In an interview celebrating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the B and B commission, nine of the commissioners talked about their original work and how it had been implemented by the Official Languages Act. Mrs. Gertrude Laing was less than complimentary about the way the act had been implemented in the public service. In discussing the wholesale creation of bilingual positions and the massive second language training program, Mrs. Laing said that they "failed to respect individuals' feelings and needs, fears and aspirations".

On those same issues co-chairman Davidson Dutton commented that it was "two steps forward and one step back". Mr. Paul Lacoste, in discussing language of work, lamented the decision not to follow the commission recommendation to set up unilingual language work units and called the language of work policy in the public service a failure.

Similarly Mr. J. B. Rudnyckyj regretted that the Official Languages Act contained such weak provisions with respect to Canada's ethnic minorities. All the commissioners were disappointed that bilingual districts had never been proclaimed as they were a key feature of the blueprint for equal partnership.

Gilles Lalonde, deputy commissioner of official languages from 1980 to 1985 and co-secretary of the B and B commission also called the bilingual districts a cornerstone of language reform but said the subject had received little more than lip service and empty declarations of intent. He also said:

The language reform envisaged by the B and B commissioners never took place.

Mr. Lalonde was equally pessimistic about the act itself saying:

Private Members' Business

Implementation of the act remains fragmentary and tentative.

He concluded by saying:

We have to admit that collectively we may have been overly ambitious and taken the wrong tack. It is high time to get our priorities straight.

Other prominent Canadians have also questioned the validity of the current act. Professors Denise Réume and Leslie Green in their 1991 article published in "The Network on the Constitution" wrote:

The main goal of any language policy should be to promote linguistic justice. Nothing in the conventional analysis even addresses this question.

Noted Concordia University sociologist Hubert Guindon stated in a 1978 article: "No matter how lofty its ideals, the legacy of the political disaster created by" the federal "official language policy is there for everyone to see". According to Professor Guindon, the act hinders rather than facilitates the changes needed as a consequence of the social modernization of the Quebecois. It contributes to a climate of ambiguity for immigrants in Quebec and uncertainty for the large private corporate sector in Quebec.

We have seen that several language commissioners, bureaucrats and academics believe the act has failed. If we return to the Spicer forum for a minute we could also see that average Canadians hold similar views. I have heard that firsthand in the west.

Here are a few short quotes from that 1991 report:

Pierre Trudeau's vision of a multicultural and bilingual society for Canada was a noble one, but it is apparent now that it simply will not work.

An hon. member: Hogwash.

Mr. Ringma: "Bilingualism has failed". It continues:

Two languages should be an asset, but administration of "official bilingualism" has taken a potentially wonderful and unifying asset and made it hurtful and divisive.

I could go on with many more such quotes expressed by average Canadians, but I believe this sampling gives a very good picture of the public's attitude toward the act.

If I heard "hogwash" from across the way, referring to what ordinary people are saying, I resent it. Canadians should have the right to express their opinion, especially on commissions such as the Spicer commission.

Now that we have clearly established the shortcomings of the act it is time to address the merits of the motion as it pertains to reviewing the act.

• (1335)

In his 1975 annual report on official languages, Commissioner Spicer wrote:

But surely there is merit in keeping more meaningful accounts. Without them, those dealing with language reform will have to continue waffling on the recurring questions of costs—hearing, but being unable to contradict convincingly such delicious polemical estimates—as \$3 billion per year for bilingualism.