

Supply

it is a country where the principal public and private institutions must provide services in two languages to citizens, the vast majority of whom may very well be unilingual.

In contrast to that fair and just position, federal language policy is now more in line with asymmetrical bilingualism. In practical terms, every day operational terms, that means protect French everywhere in Canada, especially in communities where there are few francophones, but do not extend the same rights to the English in Quebec.

This policy results in contradictory explanations of the federal language policy. In Quebec the policy is explained asymmetrically. In the rest of Canada it is explained from a utilitarian perspective.

The most disturbing aspect of all of this is that there is no single comprehensive vision of Canada and its linguistic identity. To achieve that requires a just language policy. Let us remember that only with a government that is just will we have a stable country.

I move to my second aspect of the federal language policy. I submit that the present language policy is difficult if not impossible to implement.

● (1540)

I wish to direct my attention particularly and the attention of this House to the third goal found in the 1988 Official Languages Act. The goals are that the proportion of French speakers and English speakers in the public service reflects Canada's linguistic make-up. This proportionate level of representation is to be achieved in the overall composition of the public service and at all levels of seniority and all fields of operation without infringing on the merit principle, hiring and promotion.

The hon. Minister of Justice talked a few minutes ago about the pragmatic application of that particular act. I suggest that in order for us to meet that goal it is impossible to hire on the basis of merit alone and that in some cases people will be hired on the basis of language alone.

Most recently the hon. Minister of National Defence on February 25, 1994 gave an even better illustration of how difficult it is to administer this act: "I want to tell the member that by 1997 anybody aspiring to the lieutenant-colonel rank of the military will have to be bilingual. That means we are putting on notice anglophones who want to be generals or chiefs of staff that they have to be totally and absolutely bilingual".

There are two problems. First, are anglophones the only ones who are being put on notice or are francophones being put on notice as well, or is this another example of asymmetrical bilingualism?

Second, can anyone ever claim to be perfectly bilingual?

After all is said and done regarding these things, the real issue for me is that I want Canada to be united, a country in which we can work together and respect one another in either of the two official languages without forcing each other to become individually bilingual.

Our country is bigger than any one of us individually. It is bigger than any one province or territory. It is only as we preserve justice for all that we will have a stable country. If we become greedy for power, for the power of self-serving, for special treatment, in this case because of language, we will tear this country apart.

Let us create a just language policy. Such a policy will combine common sense with reality. It will be affordable and make Canada an example of what a country can and should be.

That is the purpose of this motion. That is what we are debating. We hope the House will see it that way as well.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the member of the Reform Party.

I have a short preamble to my question. If one were taking a drive through the province of Quebec right now and turned on the radio it would not matter what station, one could hear Anne Murray, Gordon Lightfoot, not just francophone recording artists, Canadian anglophone recording artists.

When driving outside Quebec, in any other part of Canada where there are another 1,400 or 1,500 radio stations, one cannot hear francophone recording artists.

Because these are Canadian airwaves, not French or English airwaves, does the member not think that as a measure of fairness it would be a good idea to have Canadian recording artists heard on all radio stations in Canada?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is yes, of course. The answer also is one can hear French recording artists in Kelowna, Vernon and Armstrong. These are little cities in British Columbia. One can hear them in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

I would encourage the hon. member to drive through those provinces and to tune in to those radio stations because this does occur.

● (1545)

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member give his speech. He said that the present law was unjust because in part it was asymmetrical with respect to the anglophones in Quebec. He said that the provisions of the federal Official Languages Act did not protect the anglophones of Quebec as they did the francophones outside Quebec.