

*Official Languages*

inflammatory remark by the Prime Minister on the other hand. I am sorry he is not in the House at the moment. Many people still flinch when they remember the elevator operator remark. I say, Sir, that this was no way to start and the performance of the government over the next several years was unfortunately sometimes consistent with that bad start.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: I must say that it seemed to me this afternoon that the Prime Minister was eminently reasonable in what he said.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: I have to say, too, that it seems to me that sometimes he has made remarks that have sounded rather cavalier about matters of very real concern to Canadians. Not until the so-called Drury guidelines were made public on December 14, 1972, did the government give any definite indication of what it was up to in relation to the careers of public service personnel. This was almost two years after the episode in connection with the secret memorandum which aroused further suspicion and anger unnecessarily. I remind you, Sir, that on that occasion the Prime Minister provided another example of his talent for bringing people together by calling the opposition "a bunch of fanatics". At the time of that so-called secret memorandum revelation in February, 1971, I asked the government to produce details of any programs designed to create a proper balance in the public service. As I say, the silence persisted until late into 1972.

This afternoon the Prime Minister suggested that the so-called Drury guidelines were produced just as soon as possible. That I cannot accept. They were not produced for a good many years after the legislation. Indeed, I do not think they were produced until some fairly sober second thoughts were forced pretty heavily upon the government. I think the kind of guidelines spelled out in the nine points in this resolution can be identified with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury). These assurances are basically the same as those so long demanded by many who from time to time have been called fanatics.

There are other areas where the government needs to get on with the job of implementing the proposals of the Official Languages Act. I have spoken about what I consider to be the mistakes that have been made. I should like now to turn to some of the areas that I think need attention. By dealing with them we can do more to help the cause of institutional bilingualism in the country than by simply talking about it here. Mr. Keith Spicer, the Commissioner of Official Languages, has provided an ongoing critique of the government's performance. According to Mr. Spicer, the most fundamental criticism of the government is its continuing failure to close what he calls "the deep and perilous information gap" that exists between the government's intentions and the public's awareness and understanding of the government's aims. In his second report to parliament, the commissioner said:

For if there remains one disturbing setback in the slow march of Canada's federal administration toward equity for our two official languages, it is the scandalous misinformation that, in too many

[Mr. Stanfield.]

parts of Canada, still overshadows the act's basic, civilized truths—

Mr. Spicer says he is convinced that if bilingualism remains controversial in some quarters it is precisely because too many public officials, in spite of some honest efforts, have not fully met their responsibilities in explaining the legislation. Mr. Spicer indicates that this information gap is flourishing within the public service where many federal employees have a singularly inaccurate understanding of the act. If the government cannot even adequately explain it to its own employees, they cannot explain it to the Canadian people. Mr. Spicer zeros in on a number of other specific areas. He has termed second language teaching in the provincial school systems "a countrywide catastrophe" which must be remedied. I do not pretend for a moment that it is a simple thing to correct but it is important that we make progress on it, and surely we can do better than we have in the past. I say that, accepting some responsibility as a former minister of education in one of our provinces.

The commissioner also raises questions about the concept of the bilingual district—that is, the present state of the bilingual district—and states that the Official Languages Act itself is adequate to protect language rights without the particular bilingual districts which run the risk of creating linguistic ghettos. Further, the drawing of bilingual districts can create friction since they must be revised after each census. This could be a source of irritation. I think we should be looking at this area and considering it dispassionately to see what course should be followed. In his report of November, 1971, Mr. Spicer commented on language training programs in the public service. He said there had been high drop-out rates caused—

—apparently, by lengthy and partly ill-adapted courses: according to the Public Service Commission, 30 per cent of more than 22,000 students withdrew from training since 1964, and only 2,000 successfully reached the end of level 3, the top level being 4.

More recent figures show the drop-out rate running at 33 per cent. I realize this is not an easy challenge to meet, Mr. Speaker, but we cannot regard this performance as very satisfactory. When I say that, I speak—if I may put it in these terms—as a beneficiary of the system of instruction in the public service language schools. Invariably, the teachers have been courteous and very patient with me. The criticisms I have touched upon, the references I have made to Mr. Spicer's remarks are not references to the criticisms of a partisan; they are references to the observations of the officer responsible to parliament for the Official Languages Act.

We have heard criticism, as well, from the associations which represent employees in the public service and these, too, have not been based on partisan considerations. These criticisms reflected the deep concern of people in the service who did not know where they were, and no one would tell them where they were going. They wondered what had become of the Pearson pledge of April, 1966. It is no wonder that people are emotional about bilingualism in the public service. This is, in part at least, the government's fault because it failed to explain its plans for implementation.

I say the government has shown a distinct lack of consideration for the fears and apprehensions of public