

Official Languages

French Canadians as such is about from zero to 2 or 3 per cent at the most.

One needs only to review the questions put on the order paper by my colleague, the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin), to ascertain the truth of such statements. And that is what the French Canadian wants to change. He no longer wants to have a 2 per cent participation in the administration of this country when he makes up one third of the population.

The bill before us, with all the reservations it contains and amendments that clarify them, instead of fostering unity, is causing a final division. When Quebecers understand the uselessness, the futility of this legislation, they will say: We knew that there was nothing to be done.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand that some members of this house fail to grasp the true problem that now exists in Canada, that one can insult part of the population with such amendments. I read between the lines, and I see that the competence of the French Canadian is questioned. That is one of the purposes of this amendment.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, it may happen that the major criterion of competence is precisely and exactly that a person is bilingual. So, if the enforcement of this legislation is not seen in its proper light, we might end in a blind alley.

Having sat on the special committee on official languages, I have heard with my own ears what the hon. member who moved the amendment had to say and he even stated categorically that French Canadians in provinces other than Quebec were against this bill.

● (4:40 p.m.)

[*English*]

Mr. McQuaid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, do I understand the hon. member correctly, that I said in committee that our party does not want any part of this bill? Is that what he said?

Some hon. Members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matte: I did not say that the party was against this bill but that, according to you, the French-speaking minority outside Quebec was not interested in bilingualism and, consequently, was not interested in giving approval to this bill concerning the official languages.

I could refer to the proceedings—

[*English*]

Mr. McQuaid: Again on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I categorically deny ever having made such a statement in committee or anywhere else.

Mr. Woolliams: Or this party.

Mr. McQuaid: I would ask the hon. member to point out specifically where I made such a statement. If he cannot point it out, I would ask him to withdraw the remark.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matte: Mr. Speaker, if I had in hand the report of the committee, I could read what the hon. member said then. It is, I believe, in Proceedings and Evidence No. 4. I recall that the hon. member for Matane (Mr. de Bané) flared up at that statement of the hon. member.

Anyhow, we are faced with an actual situation, and we are trying to answer the problem by means of solutions likely to foster national unity. Since this is one of the ostensible purposes of this official languages bill, in order to be logical, we must act accordingly, that is make sure that this bill really promotes bilingualism in the civil service. Furthermore, we must avoid including so many reservations in the implementation of that principle, because sooner or later the consequences of this bill, which will foster division instead of unity, will be realized.

If those possibilities are seriously taken into consideration, we must be deeply convinced of the need to turn down those amendments, which imply no more and no less than French-Canadians are unqualified in some areas, and consequently, that care should be taken so that competence takes precedence over bilingualism.

Mr. Speaker, there will always be plenty of reasons for claiming that French Canadians are incompetent. The creation of bilingual districts for the specific purpose of providing adequate services for minorities does not matter. However gifted and intelligent an individual may be, Mr. Speaker, if he is unable to make himself understood by those he must work with, then he is incompetent.

If the purpose is to fight discrimination, it is important not to jeopardize, by this policy of reservations, an effect which in the long run could prove beneficial, if only the government would move forward and forget its fears. It is too late to be afraid. If that is our aim, let us simply establish bilingualism in