

Parliament To Decide Future Of English

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LOK SABHA DEBATE ON LANGUAGE REPORT

NEW DELHI, Sept. 2.—The Home Minister, Pandit Govind Ballagh Pant, today declared in the Lok Sabha that it was open to Parliament to decide 'in what manner and for what purposes' English should continue to be used beyond 1965 for the official needs of the Union.

Pandit Pant, who was initiating a debate on the report of the committee of Parliament on the official language, said: 'We have definitely held that it is not practicable to push out English by 1965.'

The Deputy Speaker ruled out all amendments to the official motion stating that the House 'takes note' of the report on the ground that the Constitution stipulated that it should be sent to the President for decision without modification or amendment of any kind.

The Home Minister warned Hindi enthusiasts against giving Hindi an 'artificial' complexion and said: 'We should not adopt such measures as will create disunity or deprive us of the cooperation of non-Hindi-speaking people in advancing the Union language for Union purposes'

The inconclusive debate was marked by most members demanding that English should continue to be used for the official purposes of the Union beyond 1965. Members also urged that a 'simple' Hindi should be developed.

The strongest opposition to continuance of English was voiced by Seth Govind Das (Congress) who said that it was

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At the same time, he said, it could not continue as the official language and it had to be replaced by an indigenous language. He said it was over to Parliament to decide how long English should continue beyond 1965, and in what manner or for what purposes.

Pandit Pant said that the report of the committee was very well received throughout the country. Unfortunately, however, he said there were a few individuals, some of them highly respected, who had not yet reconciled themselves to the scheme of the Constitution regarding the official language.

The report also had a very good Press. Not only newspapers published in various languages but also those published in English in various states, barring a few, though not unimportant ones, showed similar attitude of appreciation and understanding. Even a foreign newspaper like the guardian had commented that the committee could not have done better. While he would not claim that the proposals of the committee were perfect he would say that in the circumstances they were the best. In a matter concerning language where passions and emotions were bound up, it was not easy to have an ideal scheme. Even the scheme embodied in the Constitution, rather the constitutional settlement, was the result of a lot of give and take. The solution sought was one that would be satisfactory to all concerned.

FORCING ENGLISH

Seth Govind Das (Cong-M.P.) said that it was because a foreign language, English, had dominated many spheres of life, governmental and other, that it had not been possible to enlist the cooperation of people in many a developmental activity. It was not that Hindi was being forced on people but it was English that was being thrust on them.

Dr. A. Krishnaswamy (Ind. Madras) said the case for continuing English rested largely on the fact that it was an important world language. It was the lingua franca of the educated classes in the country today and it was eminently suited to open up wide vistas of thought from the world over. He said that only after education had been given to people should they be asked to decide the language issue. Any attempt to hustle a decision before the people were educated would not be based on an assessment of merit.

'anti-national' to retain the present status of English.

Dr. A. Krishnaswami (independent) and Mr. E. V. K. Sampath (D.M.K.) felt 'disappointed' that the Home Minister had not endorsed the Prime Minister's forthright view that it would be the non-Hindi areas which would decide for how long English should be continued as an official language.

Swami Ramanand Tirth (Congress) and Sardar Ait Singh Sarhadi (Congress) said that Hindi must be simplified as the present Hindi could not become the official language. The greatest disservice to Hindi, he said, had been done by Hindi enthusiasts.

NO PREJUDICE

Pandit Pant said it was a vital force both for good and bad. While it could unite the country it could also bring about division and disintegration.

The Home Minister said there was no prejudice or animus against English language. It was a language that had helped the country in many ways.

Mr. Sarjoo Pandey (Comm—U.P.) said the country would not suffer if English was done away with. There were people who before independence doubted whether trains would run properly if the British left.

Swami Ramanand Tirth (Cong—Bombay) said the Prime Minister's statement on official language was in line with the recommendations of the committee. There was no conflict between the regional languages and Hindi, he said.

DISSERVICE

Sardar Ajit Singh Sarhadi (Cong—Punjab) said the greatest disservice to the progress of Hindi was done by the Hindi-speaking people themselves. Their activities brought about widespread revulsion from the non-Hindi-speaking people for the language.

Pandit Brij Narain Brajesh (Hindu—Mahasabha—M.P.) thought the opposition in the country to Hindi was a temporary phase and said he was confident that the people would reconcile themselves very soon.

Mr. S. A. Matin (Ind—Bihar) said that the type of Hindi to be made the official language should be the language used by Gandhiji and understood by the common man.

Earlier, the House discussed a procedural issue whether amendments to the Home Minister's motion could be moved or not.

The Home Minister said that if amendments were allowed and any amendment was accepted, then the report to that extent would stand amended. It would then be the amended report which would have to be sent to the President. This would be against the Constitution.

The Deputy Speaker said that amendments could not be moved.

The House adjourned tomorrow.—P.T.I.

