

*Official Languages*

upon how it is administered. This legislation, which we support, can have a unifying influence in Canada. It could also be the subject of acrimony and have a divisive effect if it is not properly administered and, even more important, if it is not properly understood.

There is a great deal to be said for having machinery set up whereby any reports the commissioner makes under clause 33 will be discussed by a committee of this house in order that the whole question may be thoroughly aired. I should not need to tell the government that there is a good deal of suspicion about this legislation. Personally I think the government has done a lamentably poor job of selling it to the people of Canada. For a government that talks a good deal about involvement, consensus and participation, this government has done very little about selling this legislation. I except here the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner), who I think has made a valiant attempt, but on the whole the government has done a very poor job of explaining this legislation to the people of Canada.

In many areas of the country this legislation is misunderstood and, unfortunately in some cases, misrepresented. The government ought to be trying to do a selling job. There has been a breakdown in communications between the government and the people of Canada in respect of the purport of this measure. I want to say also that this situation has not been helped by the inflexible attitude the government has taken in regard to the amendments that have been discussed during the report stage.

I do not want to discuss the amendments now as I would be out of order, but certainly some of them were reasonable and would have improved the legislation. We heard a most specious argument advanced as to why they should not be accepted. The Minister of Justice dealt with the amendments with his usual charm and urbanity, but I have the feeling that behind his pleasantry there is a very firm iron hand which indicated to him that no changes or amendments are to be accepted irrespective of whether or not they improve the legislation. If that type of ruthless arrogance is continued in the administration of the legislation this act, which could be a great forward step in Canada, will have a divisive effect. Therefore I am at a loss to understand why the government should not be prepared to give an assurance, and even put it in the legislation, that the reports of the commissioner will be sent to a committee

so that there will be the fullest possible discussion and the widest possible understanding of what this is all about.

We are not going to have public hearings for those adversely affected. There will be some suspicion as to what has happened when reports are submitted which adversely affect some people, perhaps based on tittle-tattle and malicious gossip. There should be the fullest opportunity for a complete airing of any complaints. Certainly the best way to obtain that kind of airing and understanding of a misunderstanding that might arise would be to have all reports made under clause 33 sent to a committee of the house. I think the government should consider very seriously the amendment moved by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin).

I know the minister will say it is not usual to put instructions to the House of Commons in legislation. The fact remains that what will happen is that these reports will be tabled in due course in the House of Commons but there will be no opportunity to discuss them under Standing Order 26 because they will not be matters of urgent importance. Questions may be asked from time to time. Even if we take one of the allotted days, this will mean just a formal debate with the minister closing it at the end of the day. What is needed is a dialogue in respect of the report. What is needed is a forum in which there can be informal discussions. A committee could call the people adversely affected and could have the benefit of the opinions of witnesses who are concerned with the particular items in the commissioner's report. That can only be done by having these reports sent to a committee of the house.

We would have preferred, of course, to have an appropriate standing committee named. This amendment calls for a committee designated by His Honour the Speaker. That would be the second best choice. In whatever way the committee is appointed, particularly in the initial stages of the administration of this legislation, surely there ought to be provision made for discussion of the reports and for the widest possible understanding of them. We automatically send reports in respect of other activities of the government to committees for discussion. Why not send these reports to a committee? I make the plea, not on any political ground but for the government's own sake, that hon. members opposite accept this amendment.

I congratulate the minister on having done a very masterful job of studying this whole