

I have a second question. If I remember correctly, sometime before the end of the year, the first time I looked at this bill on the Committee on Transport and Communications of which I was not a member, we were told that it was vital that this bill be passed without delay because major contracts, to be signed in Montreal and elsewhere, depended on it. That was three or four months ago.

Is the situation still the same?

It is not the first time that governments are faced with proposals from private companies eager for contracts and are told: This has to be passed yesterday. Very often the bill relevant is passed a year later and it works just as well. How do you explain that? Did I misunderstand you? I thought I heard you say that the House of commons would refuse the amendment?

**Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Deputy Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I said that during debate on this bill in the House of Commons, an amendment similar to the one we are discussing today was refused. The fact that the government is offering a letter to which is appended a letter from the Commissioner of Official Languages rather than taking the risk of having the bill returned to the House to have an amendment passed, should indicate that a similar refused would be likely.

● (1610)

[English]

**Senator Frith:** So they would never change their minds because of what the Senate said?

[Translation]

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** Honourable senators, in regards to the agreements ready to be signed, there is some kind of urgency because each day, each week, each month that goes by is costing these authorities money since they have only expenses and no income.

We did not blithely delay tabling of this Bill. Since December we have been working with the departments and the government to prepare a document which would appease all the worries and the concerns we all share and most of all our francophone colleagues from outside Quebec. The best we could do, and we think it is excellent, is obtain a guarantee from the minister that similar clauses would be added to the agreements in all cases where official languages legislation now applies. We have a letter from Dr. Goldbloom's assistant where he says he also would have preferred an amendment although, he says, this is better than nothing, it is acceptable. This is where we stand.

**Senator Thériault:** Honourable senators, could Senator Lynch-Staunton admit that this gives us the opportunity to show that the Senate is a House of Parliament equal to the other House as is stated in the Constitution? There is no partisanship involved here. For once, could the government not accept the fact that Tories, Liberals, independents, anglophones, francophones and ethnic minorities have agreed to ask the House of Commons to review its decision?

Do you not think this could be an important historical moment in what might be the last years of a dying Senate?

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** Honourable senators, the intent of the Senate has already been brought to the attention of the government; government is already aware of the wish of many senators.

**Senator Thériault:** I am talking about the Senate, not about senators.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** Well the House of Commons was made aware of the general feeling of this House on that issue. The answer was what we have here. I cannot say more.

**Hon. Normand Grimard:** Honourable senators, I would like to come back to what the Deputy Leader of the Government said earlier. One major principle has been mentioned over and over again. I hope you have not forgotten about it. The government does not want to force a private company to respect the working language dispositions, because, as you know . . .

**Senator Thériault:** The truth is coming out!

**Hon. Philippe Deane Gigantès:** I love this senator!

**Senator Grimard:** Are you finished? I will tell you something. If you look at the speech I made on second reading of this bill, I said and I will repeat it today, there is nothing wrong with that. The government does not want to ask a private company to which it is transferring rights to respect parts V, VI and VII which are, and I hope you made the distinction . . .

**Senator Thériault:** That is exactly why we made it.

**Senator Grimard:** That only applies to the working language, not the service language. As far as the service language is concerned, those rights are enshrined in Bill C-15. That is quite clear. There is no need to address the issue, since the service language is protected, and all the appropriate dispositions of the Official Languages Act apply in full. That is one thing. But we are also talking about the working language here.

There is a distinction to be made about the working language when the government decides to sell or lease to private companies. To ask companies to abide by part VII and to promote both French and English . . .

**Senator Molgat:** Is there something wrong with that?

**Senator Grimard:** Let me finish first, and if you have questions, I will answer them. We can force the federal government to take measures to promote both French and English, but it is not as easy to ask a private firm which is definitely trying to compete, because, as I explained when I gave the government's point of view during the debate on second reading, everyone is competing these days. Montreal has to compete with Boston, with New York.

But one thing is for sure, and I hope it is clear in your mind, the public will be adequately served, as required by the Official Languages Act. The problem, and I am not ashamed to say it again, stems from the policy the government has