

Official Languages

on the Official Languages Bill. At page 51 thereof we find the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) making the following statement:

Mr. Chairman, I might take a remark that might be useful to Mr. McQuaid when he drafts his amendment. There are only eight provinces who have bilingual districts according to the recommendations of the Bilingual and Bicultural Commission, which means that ten was deemed to be a sufficient number to have all the interested provinces in the group. Now, I just say this for information.

If this is the foundation of clause 14 of the bill, it is very weak. It is a weak foundation because bilingual districts were set out by the B and B Commission on the basis of census districts within the provinces. This bill does not do that, because clause 13 quite clearly provides the following:

A bilingual district established under this act shall be an area delineated by reference to the boundaries of any or all of the following, namely, a census district established pursuant to the Statistics Act, a local government or school district, or a federal or provincial electoral district or region.

A school district may be a very small area containing few people. One can easily see that under this bill there will be no province in Canada, including the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, that will not have a bilingual district if the letter of the law is carried out and the criterion of a school district is used. The B and B Commission specifically spelled out that a census district was to be the criterion, and as a rule a census district is a large area. If, as suggested in Committee Proceedings No. 1, the foundation for clause 14 is based on that premise, it is a false and poor premise because clause 13 destroys the premise.

The Minister of Justice said this matter was debated in committee and therefore the house should agree to the findings of the committee. This is a very weak defence. Committees are appointed to investigate questions and obtain information regarding the application of a piece of legislation, but the final and conclusive drafting of the legislation rests with the House of Commons. It must forever rest with the House of Commons because here all the people of Canada are represented. Committees sometimes exclude certain groups of people, areas of the country and those who represent huge areas and think in specific ways. Therefore the findings of a committee are not binding on the House of Commons and should not be accepted by the Minister of Justice. Committees do not always consider

[Mr. Horner.]

legislation in a fair and just way, and therefore legislation should not be based upon the findings of a committee.

The Minister of Justice, of all people, should not make the kind of statement he did. I know the minister attempts to be fair in most cases, and I am sure that on reflection he will regret having made that statement. Perhaps in the not too distant future he will tell the house that he has taken a different view of this question. It is my firm belief that the provinces have a direct concern in the legislation now before us.

• (4:40 p.m.)

It is all well and good for the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) to say that we are now getting around to the stage of dealing with Canada by regions. I noted the Prime Minister's remarks with regard to regions at the last federal-provincial conference. Dealing with Canada as a place divided into regions is, to me, in direct contravention of the B.N.A. Act. Certainly we have not yet reached that stage. We still have provincial boundaries, regardless of whether this is right or wrong. Perhaps the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria wants a union of the maritime provinces. I do not know his thinking in that regard.

An hon. Member: He does not want it.

Mr. Horner: If he does not, then why promote it? That is just what he was doing in his remarks this afternoon. It is my firm belief that each province wants a representative on the board who it feels will look after its interests. I also believe that each province should know who that representative is and whether or not he is protecting its interests. The decisions of the board will affect the province, will affect the provincial educational system and will affect the municipalities. Eventually, working agreements will have to be made with the provinces in the later stages of the application of this bill. The Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) knows that to be a fact.

It is my belief that a resident of the province can serve a useful purpose in participating in the discussions which the board will be having which will affect his province. Who knows a particular province better than a resident of it who is responsible to it? It is all well and good for me, a resident of Alberta, to be made responsible for the province of Ontario, of which, incidentally, I am very fond, but I do not think the people of Ontario