

*Civil Service Act*

those who referred to that clause and I join them in expressing satisfaction over the fact that it provides that a person hired by the civil service shall be sufficiently bilingual—

—to enable the department or local office to perform its functions adequately and to give effective service to the public.

I also commend the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue) who stated this morning that there were too few bilingual employees in the civil service.

In fact, I should like to describe a small experiment that illustrates how true it is that in various divisions, no thought is given to hiring bilingual employees.

In the first place, one needs only look at the unilingual telephone directory that every hon. member has in his office to find that in any division, there are very few employees with a French name, and that only a very small number of employees can answer in French.

Last year, I brought this fact to the attention of the minister of trade and commerce, who is now Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Churchill). I asked him, on June 16, how many bilingual employees there were in the small business division. At the time, the minister replied that there were several employees but that he did not know the exact number. I then asked him how many spoke French. He replied that there was only one.

For my own information, I called up Miss Torontow of the small business division in the Department of Trade and Commerce. I spoke to her in French, and asked her whether she knew if there were some lectures given on small business on the occasion of certain visitors being in the capital. She answered "What did you say?" And I repeated my question: "Do you know whether some lectures are being given in French on the subject of small business for the benefit of those who visit the capital?" And she replied: "I don't understand." I asked her then: "Are you bilingual?" And she answered: "Yes." Then I asked her: "Can you answer me in French?" And she said: "No." I asked further: "What other language do you speak?" She replied: "A little of all, but not much of each."

Mr. Chairman, the experience I had with Miss Torontow is unacceptable to Canadians who are asking for bilingualism in the various departments. And when the Minister of Trade and Commerce states that there is one person

[Mr. Dupuis.]

speaking French in the small business division, while that person scarcely knows two or three words of that language, I believe that he not only scorns bilingualism, but also this House of Commons, because he is giving wrong information, without checking the facts.

Before resuming my seat, I want to mention another aspect of the present situation, as we are discussing the Civil Service Act.

In the past, it was the Secretary of State who had the privilege of introducing this bill in the house. I do not know why this year the Secretary of State (Mr. Dorion), who is from the province of Quebec, was deprived of the pleasure or the honour of introducing this bill, because we must keep in mind that the Secretary of State is the minister responsible to the House of Commons for the civil servants.

At this time when we are considering the Civil Service Act, the Secretary of State is not even in his seat. This morning, when it was announced that the house would examine that act, the Secretary of State left the house and he has not come back yet.

In my opinion, Mr. Chairman, it is a shame that the Secretary of State should not participate in the examination of this bill. He is the one who answers for the civil service before parliament and he should be here to discuss matters relating to the civil service commission.

I am most surprised that the introduction of this bill has again been entrusted to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming). It is always the Minister of Finance who introduces legislation. He seems to be the only competent minister on the opposite side. Yet, he has made so many blunders recently that he should have been relieved of the introduction of the Civil Service Act.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I should like to stress the point that we, from the province of Quebec, just like the members from the other provinces, are most surprised to see the small role the Secretary of State is called upon to play, that prerogatives are taken away from him and given to the Minister of Finance—indeed not even to the Minister of Finance, since he is not here, but to his parliamentary secretary (Mr. Bell) who is piloting this bill in the house.

We are surprised, to say the least. When section 47 purports to be favourable to French-Canadian employees, the French-Canadian ministers should be allowed to