

National Library Act

will have occasion to regret the step we are taking at this time.

As a final word, let me just repeat what this bill calls for. Even though the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) may never use these powers to downgrade the national interest or to exert any particular pressure that a government in power can exert when it has direct control and access to communication media, you will agree that this is hardly in keeping with the principle that has always been followed in Canada. Clause 4 reads:

The Minister shall preside over and has the supervision of the management and direction of the Library.

I would have been much more content if the general terms that already exist in the act of 1952 had been carried forward, and if we had allowed the national librarian appointed by the Governor in Council to have reasonable freedom of action in administering the library, subject of course to reporting to parliament through the Secretary of State, as is the arrangement with the C.B.C. and as no doubt will be the arrangement with E.T.V.

I think that it would have been a much better solution to the problem if the advisory council had been given greater powers, as is the board of trustees of the National Museum. The mistake has been made; it is the government's mistake, and they will have to live with it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pelletier: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to extend the debate on this bill but as for the comments of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale)—

[*English*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. May I just remind hon. members that the Secretary of State moved third reading, and therefore has no right to reply except by leave of the house.

Some hon. Members: By leave.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pelletier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In any case, I wish to make only brief comments on some things said by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris.

I shall first say that I am amazed at the complaints which he formulated about the

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

structure of the committees which, according to him, act like a kind of gag on hon. members and prevent them from introducing amendments. This statement bears no relation to reality. The truth is just the opposite. Indeed, hon. members now have the opportunity, every time a bill is studied in committee, to present amendments. Besides, four amendments which were introduced and accepted by the committee are written into the legislation that we are discussing tonight, and the hon. member for Brandon-Souris himself presented an amendment which was defeated by the majority of the members of the committee. But hon. members have a second opportunity to propose amendments to the house at this stage of the proceedings.

• (9:20 p.m.)

I must even tell him that I was quite amazed, because of his opposition to section 4 of the act, that he did not put any notice of amendment on the order paper because he could have done so. In fact, he could have proposed an amendment tonight, provided of course he had respected the very simple rule under which he had to give a 24-hour notice.

The main argument of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris is to the effect that the National Library should be a crown corporation. It is true that this body will have to become part more and more of a certain communication network. However, I would like to indicate to the hon. member that a library does not express an opinion, does not put any product on the market, but provides services.

As for me, I believe that barring an extremely serious reason, as for instance respect of the freedom of speech—which is the case in the broadcasting field—we must not take any field of activity away from the minister's responsibility. In a system such as ours, it is a duty for us to take such responsibilities.

The hon. member for Brandon-Souris states that clause 4 gives extraordinary powers to the minister, but I should like nevertheless to point out to him that it does not say that the minister shall administer the Library but rather, and I quote:

The minister shall preside over... the management and direction of the Library—

That already provides some leeway and gives the National Librarian a much greater importance than if the law spoke of direct management by the minister.