

*Water Resources*

undermine federal-provincial relations, because the French version states, and I quote:

—comprehensive programs be undertaken by the Government of Canada—

That means that the minister, owing to that expression since it is followed by the particle “ou” (or), could neglect to consult the provinces and decide on his own accord to undertake something or implement any policy. According to the English version, it is not excluded that, should the federal government decide to act because that would be within its jurisdiction, experts or provincial counsels could co-operate in formulating or implementing the policy.

Consequently, without necessarily introducing a motion against the principle of the bill, since we agree with it, I feel that Your Honour should take the matter under advisement and give an opinion on the various possible interpretations of the two texts, so as to make them as identical as possible and avoid errors in their interpretation, and in order to have a uniform text in both the English and the French versions.

If we were dealing with a text of secondary importance, the interpretation of a sub-paragraph would not matter as much. But in this case we are dealing with the policy and the principles of the bill. Mr. Speaker, I want you to know we would greatly appreciate your intervening with regard to the interpretation of those two versions.

[English]

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might say a word on the same point of order. I should like to make clear that it does not come by surprise so far as I am concerned; the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) was kind enough to inform me that he was going to raise this point of order, and I have been looking at the wording of the preamble. As a result, it seems to me that the hon. member does have a point that should be looked at by someone, and I know of no better place to look for protection around here than the Chair.

The British North America Act, in section 132, and the Official Languages Act in one section—I have not got it in front of me, but I know it is there—both make it clear that so far as the Statutes of Canada are concerned, both versions are authentic—the English version and the French version. I submit there is a danger that if we pass this bill in its present form we will have an English text that seems to say one thing, and a French text that seems to say another.

[Mr. Fortin.]

Like a good many other members of the House, I cannot claim to be very proficient in French, and I do not claim to be extremely proficient in English; but I do know the difference between the English word “and” and the French word “ou”. One puts two things together, and the other gives a choice. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me this should definitely be looked at as a point of order, and perhaps Your Honour can give a ruling on the matter either today or the next time this bill is before us.

What we are looking at is line 21 on page 1 of the English version where we have the words “government of Canada and by the government of Canada in co-operation with provincial governments,” as opposed to line 22 of the French version where we have the corresponding phrase “seul ou.” I submit they say quite different things. It is altogether likely that the hon. member for Lotbinière and I would disagree as to what we think the bill ought to say, but he and I would at least agree that the two versions ought to say the same thing. I hope Your Honour will take the point of order under advisement.

[Translation]

**Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria):** As far as the point of order is concerned, Mr. Speaker—

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I am prepared to hear further contributions on the point of order, but I might indicate right away that the point of order raised by the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) is a valid one and I am ready to agree to the suggestion that the Chair reflect on it over the weekend. However, if hon. members want to make further contributions, it I am prepared to hear them. The hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin).

[Translation]

**Mr. Mongrain:** Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief. I do not rise to—

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I have recognized the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria.

[Translation]

**Mr. Corbin:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) might have been justified to rise on a point of order in this connection, since, for all practical purposes, it is only a matter of construing in the