

Senator Lynch-Staunton: Because they have already refused. It is an assumption and a suggestion which I ask you to reflect on. You may not agree with it but it is a strong possibility.

Senator Frith has also said that he is in agreement. He does not doubt the minister's intentions in carrying out the commitment in his letter. I assume that all of us feel the same way. There are now four agreements ready to be signed: one in Dorval-Mirabel, one in Edmonton, one in Vancouver and one in Calgary. Only one of them will be touched by this letter and its commitment, ironically enough affecting the other official language to the one which preoccupies our colleagues from New Brunswick.

At present there is no airport in New Brunswick that I am aware of that is even close to becoming subject to an agreement with the federal government similar to the agreements that are ready to be signed. There have been indications of intentions, but I think we are months, if not years, away from a final decision.

Senator Corbin: This is a general law.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: That is correct. I would like to suggest that the intentions of this house and the sentiments which are shared on both sides can be brought to the attention of the government, and we can express the hope that when the *Official Languages Act* is looked at again, an appropriate amendment can be introduced.

Meanwhile, I fear—and although this has been said before, I have to repeat it again—that to send the bill back with an amendment will mean a delay in its passage and return to us for an indefinite period. It will mean the end of negotiations and the impossibility of implementing four agreements. I would think, with the commitments given by the minister in his letter and the support given them by the Deputy Commissioner of Official Languages on behalf of the Commissioner, that this would be enough for us to refuse this amendment.

Senator Gigantès: Would Senator Lynch-Staunton answer a question?

Senator Barootes: No.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: I will listen to it.

Hon. Philippe D. Gigantès: Is he your master's voice? Were you implying that only the Francophone minority in Moncton is important? There are Francophone minorities and Anglophone minorities that are involved in the other airports you have mentioned. That is why we are thinking of something general. You were saying that Senator Simard and Senator Corbin, who are from New Brunswick, worry about New Brunswick. Properly so; you are quite right. Then there are Francophones in Alberta. They, too, deserve protection.

Senator Simard: There are Anglophones in Montreal.

Senator Gigantès: There are Anglophones in Montreal. And you said that you trust the minister. Amen. Accidents happen. After the next election neither you nor us may be in power. We might get Mr. Manning, and then we would have to fight

in the trenches, and it would be harder to change a law than to change a contract. That is what we are talking about.

What you are saying is that the protection of the minorities of Canada, the protection that they have been promised, matters less than a commercial contract. This is the position you are taking.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: Honourable senators, I do not think that is a fair interpretation. We are talking about the application of both languages in certain sectors, based on the requirements of the *Official Languages Act* itself, in certain designated areas of Canada which exclude Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. I am not saying that because we are fixing on Montreal and New Brunswick we are ignoring minorities elsewhere. What you must remember is that the *Official Languages Act* does not apply to all of Canada equally.

Hon. Eymard Corbin: I have a question for the honourable senator if he would be so good as to reply. The Deputy Leader of the Government stated that there would be tremendous difficulties in the other place if the bill were to be returned with an amendment. Could he be more specific and tells us who it is who would object to such a reasonable amendment? Is it the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, the Liberal party, the independents? Where is the problem and what is it?

Senator Lynch-Staunton: I can only repeat, honourable senators, that the House has already turned down an amendment similar to this one, and we can only assume that it will maintain that position.

Senator Corbin: If I may, in the form of a comment, put another question. My experience in Parliament is that there have been situations in the past that were reversed. In our Canadian parliamentary tradition there have been situations such as the one you are alluding to if today we were to accept the amendment and return it to the House. Off the top of my head, I cannot give the specifics but, having served in the House of Commons for 16 years and having occupied the Chair in the other place for some time, I remember, in a vague way but nevertheless it is there — and I certainly stand to be corrected and humbled if I am wrong — instances where exactly the opposite of what you are fearing has, in fact, happened.

If we were to go back into parliamentary history, we would find a number of other instances. The appeal today is to reasonableness and nothing else. You have heard everyone who spoke. In terms of the business part of this bill, we are in favour of it. I certainly think it is a grand experiment. In terms of acquired rights I believe we are doing a disservice to Canada by supporting a bill which will withdraw rights that already exist. If there is reason for the existence of a Senate, it is for reasons such as this.

[Translation]

Hon. L. Norbert Thériault: Honourable senators, could the Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate answer a question? If I misunderstood, I am sorry. Did he say that if we accept the amendment proposed by Senator Corbin, the House may perhaps reject it totally. Did I understand correctly?