

Official Languages

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Lotbinière want to ask a question?

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Will the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) permit a question?

Mr. Corbin: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fortin: In view of the fact that he recognizes that any member of a committee has the right and the privilege to look more closely into a subject, I would like to ask him if he does not recognize that hon. members should have the same right?

Mr. Corbin: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I did not quite catch the meaning of the question. Would the hon. member put his question again?

Mr. Fortin: With pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

In his speech, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria pointed out that on a committee, a member may look more closely into a matter, but at the same time he said that it was a pity that hon. members should dwell on such petty details as the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cardigan.

So, I would like to ask him if he does not recognize that the house, too, has a right to study a matter thoroughly in the same way as he recognizes that the members on a committee have that right?

Mr. Corbin: I quite agree, Mr. Speaker, but so far, all the members who have taken part in the debate are those who took part in the study in committee, and they did not break any new ground. Thus, in my opinion, we are wasting our time.

• (4:30 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I believe some aspects of this amendment have been overlooked in the debate so far and should be brought to the attention of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) and the Solicitor General (Mr. McIlraith). It was interesting to hear the speech of the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis). I found it strange that a person with his background should rely so heavily upon the spirit and intent of the legislation rather than concerning himself with the law. Laws are made to

safeguard justice, to ensure the fair treatment of all people. I ask the hon. member to think back several years to the time when the leader of a country did away with laws, forgot about the spirit and intent of the law and ruled severely against a minority group in that country.

I was surprised to hear the hon. member suggest that this amendment was really not necessary. He said the responsibility in this regard rested with the government and it did not really matter what safeguards were written into the bill because they would be no good if the spirit was not there. That was a rather interesting argument from one of his background. We have only to think of Hitler, who disregarded the laws of Germany and the safeguards written into them and ruled very severely against a minority group in that country.

It is my sincere belief that the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid) constitutes a definite improvement of the bill. As the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) suggested, clause 15 of the bill brings this question within the sphere of the provinces. Clause 15(3) provides quite clearly that the provinces shall be consulted in regard to this question. It may be necessary to draft an agreement with the provinces in order that the purpose of the bill is carried out. The hon. member for Peace River dealt capably and at length with this matter.

The bill sets out criteria which provide that the government shall to some extent listen to the views of the provinces on this question. The amendments sets out that there shall be at least 12 people appointed as commissioners of a Bilingual Districts Advisory Board. The amendment does not limit the number to 12. If the hon. member for York South believes that minority groups in the central provinces should have representation on the board, I interpret the amendment as allowing for more than 12 members to be appointed. If it is thought that a board of 12 would be unwieldy, I would remind the house that in connection with another bill we amalgamated three or four boards and created a board of 17 members. It was not thought that this was unwieldy. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member's argument is valid.

This bill was considered by a committee of the house. I should like to quote a statement made to the committee because I believe it is in error. I refer to Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 1 of the Special Committee