

shall proceed with Bill No. 4 until such time as the debate may be adjourned and then take up an item in supply.

BUREAU FOR TRANSLATIONS

The house resumed from Tuesday, February 27, consideration of the motion of Mr. Cahan for the second reading of Bill No. 4, respecting the bureau for translations, and the proposed amendment thereto of Mr. Chevrier.

Mr. GEORGES BOUCHARD (Kamouraska): Mr. Speaker, when the house adjourned on Tuesday last I was endeavouring to indicate the sound fundamentals of the French language. The pride which I take in my mother tongue must be qualified by the fact that certain impurities have crept into the language of educated people, due to environment, to hardships, to the mingling of English and French forms of expression and to the introduction of commercial and professional phrases and colloquialisms. This makes it very necessary to maintain a high standard of perfection in the translation of French into English and English into French. If translation were only the mere substitution of a word from one language into another, then perhaps in our craze for economy we might have a machine with a finger-board so arranged as to produce a French word as one touched the corresponding English word, just as we have the adding machine for accountants. But, Mr. Speaker, translation is a much more difficult task than that. I would invite this house to consider this fact, that even a highly-qualified bilingual man is not necessarily a good translator. I should hesitate myself, with the knowledge I have of the French language, to undertake the translation of my own speeches; and perhaps, if the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) would himself try it, with his long experience, he would at times find it a very arduous undertaking.

In an address over the radio under the auspices of the Professional Institute of the Civil Service, Monsieur Pierre Daviault, a learned translator and a well known author, said last year:

To translate is not to substitute words to other words. To the translator the text is merely the author's thought in its rough state that he must fashion into words. It is incumbent on him to shape it into a form which will make it convey its full meaning. The translator's task is nothing short of a literary essay, and to translate presents all the difficulties inherent to the essay, but is even more difficult. Translation is not the expression of one's thought, which is familiar and always present to one's mind. The translator must assimilate a thought that is not his own, a

[Mr. Bennett.]

frame of mind and the shades of thought of another. Besides, he has to be imbued with the author's style, because the translation must preserve the original tone.

I quote another paragraph from the same lecture:

What could not be said of the traps laid by the vocabulary! There are no perfect equivalents between two languages. "From one language to another," wrote Albert Dauzat in *la Philosophie du Langage*, "there is no equivalence in the means of expression and a strictly adequate translation of a conversation or of a literary work can hardly be conceived. The number of ideas that may be expressed by a word varies from one language to another and the mutual associations created by a common term are so close that the evocation of one almost invariably infers that of another idiomatically different: the result will be an alteration of the notion, imperceptible perhaps, but not less certain. . . ."

And towards the close of his address he said:

The technical vocabulary with its innumerable, varied and changing words is a constant cause of concern to the translator. There is no dictionary which embodies all its modifications. Only by reading scientific works written in both languages is it possible, by means of comparison, to complete a lexicon. It is an arduous, patient and difficult task!

It must be noted that dictionaries are only of a limited help to the translator, although he must have them.

Now, in confirmation of that, I will quote from a report which was prepared on behalf of the translation staff by a learned translator, a very distinguished author, a man who stands very high in the literary world, and one who is to-day president of the Royal Society of Canada, the chief translator of debates, Monsieur Leon Gerin. Referring more particularly to the translation of debates, he said:

The work of the translators of debates may be aptly described: expert translation and editing, in reference to a wide range of subjects, many of them technical. As man's activities are incessant and constantly changing in their aims and means, so language is ever undergoing alterations in form and substance. Dictionaries, encyclopaedias and special works are soon out of date when it comes to translating the debates of parliament. For instance, this great world war has had the effect of introducing into our common parlance, and more so in the parliamentary debates, a number of new terms and expressions. Under such conditions, the translator is bound to launch out on his own account, and build his own modern and technical card-index vocabulary through the perusal of the most recent books, periodicals, etc.

To conclude this little dissertation on translation, I would just refer you, Mr. Speaker, to a very small work the author of which is well known to us all—"On Translation" by Hilaire Belloc. The author, on the opening page of his book, says: