

Let us proceed a step farther and ask ourselves the purpose for which this measure was introduced. Who asked for the change? What body of public opinion is behind this proposal? The minister would have been very kind had he told us. Has the sponsor of the bill taken only the gratuitous advice of his personal friends who caused to be translated the two documents which were found to be full of mistakes and which do not honour the French language? I refer to the last speech from the throne and to the St. Lawrence deep waterways treaty. Those are two good models of very poor translation.

Before dealing with the reasons put forward by the minister let me for a moment consider the views of a few authorities in the matter. I am told that in 1909 the translation service was more or less centralized, but in view of the inconvenience of the system a very learned and experienced translator, Mr. Frechette, was asked to visit a few European countries, among others Belgium, where there are two official languages, and Switzerland, where there are three. In his report Mr. Frechette said:

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Board of Internal Economy, House of Commons, Ottawa, Gentlemen: In compliance with the minute of your board of December 17, 1909, I proceeded in May last to Brussels and Berne, to inquire into the organization and working of the systems of translation obtaining in those capitals in consequence of the duality of official languages in Belgium and of their plurality in Switzerland.

On page 5 of the same report we read:

It is evident that so many various translations, for which the most extensive dictionaries and the usual language are altogether inadequate, must require from the translator vast erudition, constantly supplemented through long hours of research and tireless application. Would it not be too optimistic to expect great success from the anomaly of an organization where it is required of each man to be a universal specialist in order to be fit for expert work in all directions.

I quote again:

The present system established some seventy years ago may have answered the needs of the time, when the public documents were very far from being as voluminous, as numerous and as specialized as they are to-day, and when the greater part of them, being already in French, had not to go through the French office. But now that the publications of the public service deal with so many activities unknown to the primitive country that we were then; now that all the human interest, more and more specialized, find their expression in the papers presented to the Canadian parliament, a centralized translation office can no longer do justice to so much work that calls for specialists. The experience I have acquired during thirty-six years of service in the commons has convinced me that in centralization rests the vice of our system.

[Mr. Bouchard.]

And so on. Then, quoting again:

The departmental translator having a narrower field of work could comparatively soon master the two languages in the specialties dealt with every year in the documents issued by his department. He could do his work much quicker and much better, all other things being equal. His direct responsibility for the French version of the departmental publications would also naturally have a tendency to secure his best efforts.

The first intimation that we have concerning an amalgamation is contained in a memorandum from the Civil Service Commission dated April 15, 1924. It purports to be an extract from the report of the special committee of the Senate on the civil service. Then, from sessional paper No. 15, 29A, page 10, I quote the following:

The commissioners considered that it would probably be beyond their powers to ask that members of the staffs of the Senate and House of Commons and of the Supreme and Exchequer courts should come before them, seeing that in 1892 the Civil Service Commissioners were authorized to extend their inquiries to the staffs of the Senate and the House of Commons, but on constitutional grounds the clerks of the two houses objected thereto.

The memorandum in its provision for a central translating service excluded the Senate and House of Commons staffs. While the special committee made several suggestions regarding various services of the government, they apparently did not see fit to mention the translation services.

A more recent step was the appointment of a committee headed by Mr. Watson Sellar, as I read in a return brought down by the Secretary of State, sessional paper 27, on February 6, 1934. This committee was composed of Watson Sellar, B. J. Roberts, Fred Cook, P. T. Coolican, E. Chamberlain, F. C. C. Lynch, L. L. Bolton, L. Beaudry, Dr. A. T. Charron, C. H. Bland and the secretary, Mr. James. What was the conclusion of that committee? The report, a copy of which I hold in my hand, says:

No complaints as to the quality of the translated texts were made to the committee.

Mr. CAHAN: From what is the hon. gentleman reading?

Mr. BOUCHARD: I am reading from a copy of the Sellar report; if it does not suit the minister perhaps he will tell me. The committee reported as follows:

No complaints as to the quality of the translated texts were made to the committee. It was found that throughout the departments a general policy of decentralization is in effect. The adoption of such policy was the result of the question being explored in 1910 after a report was made by Mr. Achille Frechette, who, under instructions of the Board of Internal