

Mr. BRADETTE: I was being misinterpreted by the Secretary of State.

Mr. CAHAN: The hon. member for Kamouraska (Mr. Bouchard) insisted that a high standard of French translation should be maintained in this country. I can assure the hon. gentleman that it will be maintained throughout the service by the selection of translators with special technical qualifications to translate technical documents and also by the selection of others who are specially qualified by training and experience to supervise the work of less competent translators before, as is now the case, immature, unrevised and otherwise unsatisfactory translations are sent to the printing bureau for printing.

The hon. member for l'Islet (Mr. Fafard) gratuitously interjected in the course of the debate a reflection upon my knowledge of the French language. I sincerely regret my personal deficiencies in this respect, but though the hon. member for l'Islet has mingled freely with Canadians whose maternal language is English, I would not hesitate to challenge him that I shall, without the use of a dictionary, prepare as exact a translation of French prose into English as he can translate a similar document from English into French.

Mr. BOUCHARD: Who will be the judge?

Mr. CAHAN: That is what I am coming to. The difficulty is in finding a judge, because hon. gentlemen have been complaining time and time again, using no unrestricted words of condemnation, of the translation by a translator of this house of the Address of His Excellency the Governor General at the opening of parliament. I have received statements from certain gentlemen who have qualifications as translators and who are bilingual by education and experience, one of them, for instance, being Mr. Pierre Lefort, special representative of La Presse in the gallery of the House of Commons, who writes:

I have no hesitation in stating that the translation of the speech from the throne delivered at the opening of the present session is in all respects a remarkable one. By its directness of treatment, use of the active form and choice of the right word, it bears the stamp of a translator of the very first order.

The translator has succeeded in avoiding the rut of the passive form, which simply transposes the English form, but is ill-adapted to French language, producing therein dull, lifeless sentences. The right word and the proper construction, present throughout the whole of this translation, restore to the French language its true genius, made of clearness, strength and conciseness.

This translation demolishes the current fable that English is more concise than French and

[Mr. Speaker.]

better adapted to our administrative needs. It would indeed do honour to the translators at Geneva, sometimes offered as examples, and of which the League of Nations is so proud.

Another gentleman, a very eminent man, Canon Emile Chartier, vice-rector of the university of Montreal, has also written to express his opinion in the same connection. He writes:

I would not hesitate to say that nowhere has the translator distorted the sense of the original text, but rather that he has rendered it with marvellous accuracy, and that moreover he has relieved the heaviness of certain English sentences, either by making their subordinate clauses principal or their principal clauses subordinate.

I consider on the whole that the translator may well be satisfied with his work: the translation of so technical a text exposed him to errors of interpretation that, for my part, I fail to perceive anywhere.

Mr. BOUCHARD: He is no translator; he is just a literary man.

Mr. CHEVRIER: Would the minister permit this question? How did it come about that he received those letters?

Mr. CAHAN: You will have to seek the information from them. I am not proposing, and this bill does not propose, any new centralization in the work of the translators. The translation of the blue books and of the large bodies of important material emanating from the administration of government is centralized in this little bureau here. What is really proposed by the bill is not centralization but, as my hon. friend the Solicitor General (Mr. Dupré) said, the coordination, direction and supervision of translation under a superintendent directly responsible to the government and for which the government will be responsible to this house and to the country, as it is not now.

The criticism, as I have already stated, which has been repeated so frequently, that the translation of technical matter will not be made hereafter by specialists in the particular subjects dealt with certainly is not based on facts, nor is that an intelligent criticism in view of the fact that the government will assume the responsibility with respect to such matters. It is the intention of the government that any translators who have specialized in particular subjects shall continue their work in respect of the same subjects, and where possible their services will be utilized to supervise the work of the less competent translators.

The work of translation, as I have already stated in reply to another criticism, does not ordinarily lead to promotion to administrative