

Official Languages

of vanishing into thin air when his opponents take the floor.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pelletier: I never had the pleasure—besides, I wonder whether it is a pleasure or not—to speak while he was here. How can the hon. member for Crowfoot seriously move that amendment and face up to cases such as this one, for instance: a unilingual French-speaking federal civil servant who, by his sole competence, becomes the head, let us say, of the Income Tax office in Toronto, or else, to come closer to the hon. member for Crowfoot, of the Income Tax office in Edmonton.

[*English*]

Mr. McIntosh: How about the commissioners you fired?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pelletier: I would not know how to reply to the objections of this honourable member of whose constituency I am not exactly sure. I feel he has nothing to do with this discussion, since he is not interested in the bill. Besides, as far as I am concerned, he could leave the house right now and I would not feel the difference. I do not understand what he is saying but I suspect that it would not be very useful to me even if I did.

I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot study an amendment such as this one without considering also its practical consequences. And its practical consequences—I see that the honourable member has returned; I welcome him back—if it were passed and fully implemented, would make it possible for the honourable member for Crowfoot, if defeated in a future election, to be admitted in the Civil Service and become, for instance, an office head in the province of Quebec where nobody would be able to understand him. Has he truly considered the consequences of an amendment which, to my mind, is completely thoughtless and against one of the basic objects of the bill now under consideration?

I would also like to point out also—to throw light on the hon. member's statement—that he made some allegations which seem to me extremely gratuitous. He said, for example, that according to the bill, the responsible minister would appoint the Commissioner of official languages and that the latter would report to the responsible minister.

[*Mr. Pelletier.*]

I was wondering when listening to him, whether the hon. member had read the bill. If so, he would have found in clause 19 (2)—

The Commissioner shall be appointed by commission under the Great Seal after approval of the appointment by resolution of the Senate and House of Commons.

As for reporting to the responsible minister, he would have read in clause 33, and I quote:

If within a reasonable time after the making of a report containing any recommendations under section 31, no action is taken thereon that seems to the Commissioner to be adequate and appropriate, the Commissioner, in his discretion and after considering any reply made by or on behalf of any department or other institution concerned, may transmit a copy of the report and recommendations to the Governor in Council and may thereafter make such report thereon to parliament as he deems appropriate.

Therefore, the Commissioner of Official Languages would report to parliament, and the same provision is contained in clause 34 (2):

Every report or statement to parliament made by the Commissioner under section 33—

• (9:00 p.m.)

Nowhere is it mentioned that the minister responsible shall appoint the Commissioner of Languages nor that the Commissioner of Languages shall report to the minister responsible.

Of course, any member may look at this legislation with a critical eye—this is what we are here for—but he should at least read it first.

I should like to raise another point. Much has been said tonight about a fair treatment being given to civil servants and God knows I am all for it. It has been said and acknowledged that injustice has been done. That is right. It has been asserted that two wrongs do not make a right, and that is also true.

Now what surprises me is that no reference is never made to the fairness extended to the public, while the legislation respecting the official languages is essentially intended to render justice, at the language level, to a whole section of the Canadian public, that is to the English-speaking Canadian public and the French-speaking one as well living in communities with a different linguistic majority.

Now it is most important, Mr. Speaker, for one not to worry exclusively, nor even primarily, when considering such legislation, about the fairness exercised with respect to civil servants, but to worry above all about