

I understand that this gentleman had occupied the position of chief translator of the commons for quite a number of years, and he was supposed to be an expert in matters pertaining to translation. At all events he had the confidence of the committee of the house which sent him to Belgium and Switzerland. What did he find in those two countries? Mind you, I do not believe we should copy everything that is done in other countries, but we should take from those other countries the best that is in their policies and their methods of administration. This gentleman found that each department in Belgium had its own translation staff.

Thus it is seen that nowhere in those two countries—

Speaking of Belgium and Switzerland.—is translation centralized. And in both countries satisfaction is expressed with the system in use.

For these reasons he concluded his report to the committee of the House of Commons in this way:

I conclude that it is desirable to extend in Canada to all the departments the practice already intelligently introduced in some of them, as, for instance, the Department of Agriculture, and very recently, if I am not mistaken, that of marine and fisheries;

I believe that at the time Hon. Sydney Fisher was Minister of Agriculture. This afternoon the hon. member for Labelle spoke at length about Hon. Sydney Fisher and related certain conversations he had with the hon. member in connection with his wish to do the best he could for the French element of this country. It was under his administration that the Department of Agriculture appointed translators for that department, and this gentleman stated that the work done by this staff was far better than the work done by the translators under the control of the centralized bureau. From 1911 up to date we have had the system of having these translators in each department. We do not pretend that their work has been perfect, but we say that if under the centralized system there were delays in the translating and printing of documents there were also delays under the system which succeeded it, and we have no assurance that these defects will disappear under the system introduced by the present bill. We have no guarantee that under any system unqualified persons will not occupy positions to which they are not entitled. There will always be some lazy members of any department; human nature is not perfect and mistakes will be made under whatever system you may introduce.

[Mr. Fournier.]

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that in my opinion it was not necessary to introduce this bill simply because translators of the House of Commons and of the Senate have long vacations. Surely some means could have been easily devised, without changing the whole system, to give further work to those people. Will this superintendence give more efficient service than is given at the present time under the deputy ministers of the various departments? I am sure whoever may be put in charge will not be acquainted with all the documents, reports, correspondence and other papers which will have to be translated. He will have to rely on what the deputy minister sends him for translation. The work will only pass under another hand, and that will not increase efficiency. So the reasons given by the hon. member for Labelle are contradicted by the report made in 1910, and the actual facts do not bear out his contentions.

In the last part of his speech the hon. member dealt with the constitutional aspect of the question; he stated that a further recognition of the French language was made by this bill. The hon. member for Ottawa (Mr. Chevrier), however, told us that the rights of the French language in Canada were to be found in section 133 of the British North America Act, wherein they are clearly defined and restricted. Section 133 of the British North America Act reads as follows:

Either the English or the French language may be used by any person in the debates of the houses of the parliament of Canada and of the houses of the legislature of Quebec; and both those languages shall be used in the respective records and journals of those houses; . . . The acts of the parliament of Canada and of the legislature of Quebec shall be printed and published in both those languages.

This is the only section which gives any legal right. I am not speaking of moral rights, or of privileges granted or given, or concessions made. I am saying that the only legal right for the use of the French language seems to be in this section of the British North America Act.

What does the bill state further, or add to this section? Part of section 3 of the bill contains the words:

In making and revising all translations from one language into another of all departmental and other reports, documents, debates, bills, acts, proceedings and correspondence.

This bill does not add to any rights in regard to the French language, and I believe it comes down to a matter of administration.