

give any lessons to Senator Simard, or Senator Murray or Senator Beaudoin or Senator Bolduc, or any senators here that have been involved in the trenches, that I speak to you today. Senator Simard has spent most of his political life—at least a good part of it—fighting these battles, much more than I have. So I do not come here to preach but simply to give a perspective and to explain not to Senator Simard, or Senator Thériault or Senator Molgat or Senator Gigantès, or any of the others of a like mind, why we are making a bit of a fuss about this and why we have an opportunity to do something non-partisan here for the benefit of our country.

I want to speak to those of you who wonder why we are making such a fuss about this when you, I am sure, are tempted—in fact perhaps convinced—to accept the undertakings of the minister, because I accept them too. I am not suggesting that they are not reliable. However, there is a principle that is involved. Thirty years have gone by building what now is represented by the *Official Languages Act*. What is happening here is a small chisel mark on what has been built—nothing that will bring the whole thing down, nothing that will make the operation of this act impossible, but a mark nevertheless. Those wondering why we are making a fuss about it say, “But we got the undertakings of the minister and we all accept them. No one here quarrels with them or says that they are not reliable.”

We are told by others that the law will operate and that the airports will operate because this is but a small part of this important bill. Why are we picking this one little part of this bill to make such a fuss about? For those of you who so wonder, and who are inclined not to make a fuss about it, it is simply for the reasons underlined by Senator Simard and by Senator Molgat and others. We now have, as we know, two official language commissioners saying that it is an important development because it could be the beginning of a new regime that states that the *Official Languages Act* gradually will not apply to situations and not apply to certain statutes because other administrative arrangements are put in place. That is all we are saying. Do not do it that way. It is not a matter of a large right and a large wrong. It is a matter of the principle of the beginning of another way of establishing the official languages regime, which is not as reliable or as solid as the *Official Languages Act*.

That is why Senator Corbin's amendment is better than my amendment was because all it does is say, “Let us have these provisions, the applicable provisions of the *Official Languages Act*, apply”. It is a positive amendment; mine tended to be a negative one by removing something. All that is being asked, and all that I have asked members on my side and members on your side to support, is simply to say, “No, we do not want a new regime that substitutes administrative measures for the *Official Languages Act*. We want to send that message—all of us—back to the House of Commons. This is the Senate speaking to the House of Commons, not the Conservatives or the Liberals, saying to the House of Commons, “No, we think this act should stay and should apply and not have a part of it supplanted by administrative measures.”

[Senator Frith.]

I am sure, honourable senators, that if we do send it back to the House of Commons they will accept such an amendment because they will be aware that all of us are prepared to support the rest of the act.

[Translation]

Hon. John Lynch-Staunton (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, before we make a decision, I think it is essential that I correct some facts and that I remind you of some others that were omitted in today's discussion.

There was talk about Messieurs D'Iberville Fortier and Goldbloom's concern relating to the lack of some provisions in this bill. Nobody mentioned, for instance, that Mr. Rainboth, the Deputy Commissioner of Official Languages, after being informed of Minister Corbeil's letter, responded as follows, and I quote from the *Debates of the Senate* of February 27th last:

● (1600)

[English]

As Dr. Goldbloom indicated to you in your recent meeting, he is currently in favour of the application of Parts V and VI of the *Official Languages Act* to local airport authority leases in prescribed regions.

I think that is a sentiment shared by all of us.

It would have been preferable for such a provision to be included in the legislation to provide a continuing guarantee, but I am confident that in the absence of such a provision Dr. Goldbloom would support an alternative measure such as that which you are proposing to introduce.

It was signed by Peter L. Rainboth who is Deputy Commissioner of Official Languages.

Senator Frith: It was not Dr. Goldbloom who said that.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: We can assume that Mr. Rainboth spoke in the name of his superior, and since then we have no reason to believe that Dr. Goldbloom is not in agreement with those sentiments. Otherwise I am sure we would have heard from him.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, I must remind the Senate that amendments similar to the one we debated yesterday and the one before us today were put to the House of Commons, both in committee and in the House, and they were refused. If you want to know why, you must consult the record! However, we must not forget the fact that—

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Senator Frith: Let it be on their heads, then.

Senator Lynch-Staunton: That is not the point. Let them take their responsibilities. If this law goes back to the House of Commons amended as suggested, we have every reason to feel that it may not be introduced in the house, or even get on the order paper.

Senator Olson: Why?