

in section 129, we find that it is proposed to substitute the word "quatorze" for the word "sept." Well, how in God's world could a translator make the mistake of using the word "quatorze" instead of the word "sept?" It is no easy task to translate laws. Those who have some knowledge of two or more languages know of the enormous difficulties that are met with in the translation of laws or speeches or anything else. We have had what I might call a world example in the translation of the Peace Treaty. Complaints were made at the Peace Conference that the Treaty was not properly translated, although the services of the best experts in the world had been obtained to translate that Treaty. Of course, we may easily come to the conclusion that a translation is very far from perfect without casting blame on anybody, but this particular case brings us to the consideration of a much wider question, and it is this: If so many mistakes have been made in the translation of the Criminal Code, a statute that is referred to every day—and probably it was because of that that the mistakes were discovered—what other mistakes must there be in the translation of other laws? If we come to the conclusion that there must be many other mistakes in the translation of other statutes, then the French versions of our laws are very undependable and very uncertain. This is certainly a very serious state of affairs. In my practice I have seen lawyers use either the French or the English version, according to which best suited their purpose; the Minister of Justice, having been a judge, probably knows something about that. That there was a difference between the two versions was apparent. Of course, there is always the guiding principle—if it is a guiding principle—that when a law is originally written in only one language we should refer to the original in order to find out what its intent was. But it is a serious state of affairs when in the translation of a single law there are over three hundred mistakes, the correction of which now has to be made. I am simply suggesting that the Government should adopt some method of ensuring that all our laws are correct, or should appoint some one to supervise the laws as they go through, so that something may be done in order to remedy this inconvenience, because I am quite sure that if we set translators to work on some other law, next session a new Bill will have to be introduced in order to correct discrepancies.

Mr. DOHERTY: I am very much afraid the hon. member is correct in his conten-

[Mr. Denis.]

tion. Might I suggest to him a very simple way by which the recurrence of this might be avoided? This was an exceptional case in which the law was passed in one language and subsequently translated; but with that exception all laws that come before Parliament do so in both languages. If hon. gentlemen who are perfectly familiar with the French language would have before them, as the Bills are being passed, the French version as well as the English, and would keep an eye on the French version, it would be a very simple matter to see that they both correspond. In that way we would have the matter controlled by this House and we would not be dependent on the greater or less degree of carefulness on the part of translators. Strictly speaking, that would be the proper way of passing the laws, although I do not want to suggest that every hon. member should be reading the two versions. I make that suggestion as a remedy which I think would be an effective one. In the meantime, perhaps the committee which we are going to form to go over this Bill might profit by that occasion to talk over what means might be found to guard in the future against the recurrence of this serious defect.

Mr. FIELDING: Might I ask, just as a matter of curiosity, not by way of criticism, by what process the conclusion is reached that the English version is right and the French version is wrong? Are we not bound to assume that both languages are equal before the Parliament of Canada? Somebody might say: You are all wrong; the French version is right; what you want to do is to correct the English version.

Mr. DOHERTY: It is quite possible that there might be an error in the English rather than in the French version; but as regards this particular law, we are in a position to know that the English version was the only version scrutinized by Parliament and that in this instance the French version is a translation. I am not at all prepared to say that a court would exercise a preference as between one language and the other; the court would have no proof by which it could assume that one language was the original language. If you take this instance to which attention was called, the difference between the two versions is this, that the English version says that a man shall be liable to a sentence of fourteen years, while the French version says that he shall be liable to a sentence of seven years. Speaking offhand, I would think that it would be the duty of any judge to