

ation of every member having at heart the maintenance of a high standard of perfection for both the official languages of this country. If we were to vote on pious wishes and good intentions, and if the bill could incorporate them and all the kindly sentiments so beautifully expressed by the Secretary of State (Mr. Cahan) and particularly by the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa), I would not hesitate for a moment to support it. But we have to deal with the cold letter of the bill itself, and the fact that no one on the other side rises to support it makes me think there is something suspicious. I might quote a French proverb: "Ce bloc enfariné ne me dit rien qui vaille."

This afternoon the Secretary of State took pains to explain in full detail the functioning of the printing bureau. His observations were very interesting, but in listening to him I rather gathered the impression that the printing bureau was the main thing and that the translation work must accommodate itself to that. While fully conscious of the necessity of still further improving our translation system, I fail to see how this measure can accomplish that end. I must admit at the outset that the measure is likely to lead the unwary observer to the belief that it is a decided step towards the improvement of official translations. In a century like ours, characterized by a rushing tide of activity towards centralization and rationalization even beyond the bounds of reason, any industrially minded man is apt to welcome this measure for the sake of economy and efficiency. The promoter of this bill does not seem to be immune to the tendency of our age when he takes comfort in the fact that the accounting system has been centralized. Let us read what he said at page 8 of Hansard for Monday, January 29, 1934:

On review of the matter it was recommended, first by the Civil Service Commission, that to avoid the appointment of a number of translators in addition to the number I have mentioned, and in view of the fact that a consolidation had been made under the Minister of Finance of the accounting systems of the different departments, a bureau might be created to which the existing translators would be attached, subject to the Civil Service Commission in every respect—

This comparison, I am sorry to say, has shaken my faith in the competence of the minister to deal with such a delicate matter. While I fully appreciate the high functions of an accountant I fail to see any similarity between the functions of an accountant and those of a translator. Accountants have to deal with figures, which are not to be in-

fluenced by circumstances of place, time or persons. Unlike the accountant the translator has to adapt his subtle art to environment and to the various conditions so ably expressed by my hon. friend who just resumed his seat. The temperament not only of the author but of the reader cannot be neglected in a good translation. As an instance of that, if I were using in English the expression "my constituents" the proper French word perhaps would be "mes commettants," while our French Canadians are accustomed to "mes électeurs," or perhaps more particularly to "chers électeurs." So a translator must keep in mind the character of those who will read his translation, while accounting is not so temperamental.

I will endeavour to show a little later, Mr. Speaker, that a translator is a writer, and even something more than a writer. Looking over the country I may say that I could more easily point to a score of good authors than to a good translator. One readily admits that accountants can be transferred with efficiency from one department to another, but such is not the case with translators. There is no such marvel as a general translator. I would quote from an article which appeared in *L'Action Catholique* of February 5, 1934, under the signature of Thomas Poulin:

(Translation)

To unify, things of like nature must be put together so that they may blend. The translation work of the various departments cannot be thrown in the same bag. A translator who excels in his own specialty would fail in the work of another department. No doubt with perseverance and time he might become quite efficient; but we believe that the day he becomes an expert in the work covering all departments, it will be his last day.

A man cannot be an encyclopedia. That is the conclusion arrived at when it was decided, after close study, to specialize translation. Such a translator will be designated to such a department and will thus be able to master the terminology of the technical subjects to be translated in that department. This applies to all departments.

Because this was done, to-day, we have French blue books which are quite presentable; well translated, even very well so.

I would suggest, for instance, that the translator in agricultural matters should not be entrusted with legal work, and vice versa. In order to do justice to his subject and to himself the minister should have the services of competent translators for professional work such as chemistry, engineering and legal work. Has anyone ever thought of pooling those professional activities? The world cannot move in the right direction unless people cease basing their actions on dreams and theories of that nature.