

the previous seventy years in this country we had a centralized bureau for translations. During the course of his report he gave the same reasons that were advanced this afternoon by the hon. member for Labelle in recommending a change in the system. This report was adopted by the House of Commons and the change went into effect in 1911. Before 1910 it was complained that delays were occasioned in the translating and printing of proceedings of the Commons and the different departments; that the French versions were prepared too late to be of much use and that large sums of money were spent because of this faulty system. At that time there were also translators who did not possess the necessary qualifications to fulfil the position. The report also mentioned that the system of having translators in each department would be far more efficient than the system of centralization.

I particularly refer to this interesting report which was made by Mr. Frechette. He visited Switzerland and Belgium, in which countries duality of languages exists as it does in our country, and after explaining that in Canada the service was centralized in an office he went on to say:

—recruited—may I be permitted to say—independently of any idea of specialization in the work. Of course, the great variety of different technical matters which find their place in the sessional papers is too well known to the members of the board for their enumeration being otherwise than superfluous here; however, it is proper for me to say that all the arts, the sciences, the industries, the interests with which the government of the country is concerned, in turn call for the earnest labour of the House of Commons translator. It is evident that so many various translations, for which the most extensive dictionaries and the usual language are altogether inadequate, must require from the translator vast erudition, constantly supplemented through long hours of research and tireless application. Would it not be too optimistic to expect great success from the anomaly of an organization where it is required of each man to be a universal specialist in order to be fit for expert work in all directions?

All the efforts that the chief translator may make towards specializing the abilities of his staff are rendered vain by the manner in which the documents come from the printing office and by the necessity of having the work done quickly.

The main argument advanced by the Secretary of State this afternoon seemed to be that large amounts of money were spent because of the delay in making the translations in the different departments. Let us ask ourselves whether, by centralizing this staff of translators, the translations will be

made more quickly and whether they will be of better quality. In section 3 the bill states:

(1) There shall be a bureau under the Minister, to be called the bureau for translations, the duties and function of which shall be to collaborate with and act for all departments of the public service, and both houses of the parliament of Canada and all bureaus, branches, commissions and agencies created or appointed by act of parliament, or by order of the governor in council, in making and revising all translations from one language into another of all departmental and other reports, documents, debates, bills, acts, proceedings and correspondence.

(2) It shall be the duty of all departments of the public service and all such branches, commissions and agencies as aforesaid to collaborate with the bureau in carrying into effect the provisions of this act and the regulations made thereunder.

Actually there is a staff of translators in each department, who are under the supervision of the deputy minister. The minister and his deputy decide which documents, reports and correspondence shall be translated. In every department we have efficient deputy ministers; they are men of ability and men who know their work, and they have this work done by translators under their immediate control. If all these translators are sent to a central bureau under the superintendence of one man, every department will have to communicate with this man as to translations. Certainly time will be lost in sending work from the different departments to this head office; it will require more messengers and a greater staff of assistants, and the technical officers of the departments will not be at hand to advise the translators during the progress of the work. Under the present system the translators can communicate every day and, if necessary, every hour with the technical officers of the different departments; they can receive advice and work accordingly. At page 5 of the report of 1910 I find the following:

The present system, established some seventy years ago, may have answered the needs of the time when the public documents were very far from being as voluminous, as numerous and as specialized as they are to-day, and when the greater part of them, being already in French, had not to go through the French office. But now that the publications of the public service deal with so many activities unknown to the primitive country that we were then; now that all the human interests, more and more specialized, find their expression in the papers presented to the Canadian parliament, a centralized translation office can no longer do justice to so much work that calls for specialists. The experience I have acquired during thirty-six years of service in the Commons has convinced me that in centralization rests the vice of our system.