

Official Languages

representatives on the Commission and on the Bilingual Districts Advisory Board.

• (5:10 p.m.)

As I said at the outset, the Prime Minister complained that the newspapers did not give adequate information to the people about the bill. At that time I had also told the Secretary of State that he should do all he could to inform the population about the consequences of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I think the members of the Advisory Board living in the province involved will know best the problems of the bilingual districts. As I said earlier, I do not see what valid argument the government can put forward to reject the amendment we moved this afternoon.

Obviously, sections 14 and 15 must be seen in the same context, and if we want the population of the provinces which will have to take part in the establishment of bilingual districts to be well informed on the sitting up of those districts, the best procedure would be to appoint representatives of each province on the Advisory Board.

The hon. member for York South said this afternoon that for committees and commissions, we must stop seeking a geographical representation and we should particularly try to get men of ability. I told him that to take geographical boundaries into consideration does not exclude the possibility of making a good choice. To me, the argument of the hon. member for York-South is very weak.

Even if we ask for a geographical representation, so to speak, on this Advisory Board, nothing prevents us at the same time from appointing proficient people.

I would like to hear the Secretary of State put forward a more convincing argument than that of the Minister of Justice this afternoon to show us that our amendment is worthless.

The previous speaker of the New Democratic Party, as well as Créditiste members told us that our amendment was valid and should be incorporated in the legislation in order to ensure that the provinces will be adequately represented on the Bilingual Districts Advisory Board.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is a reasonable and logical request which would help the government to make the people better understand the substance of the bill now under consideration for the establishment of bilingual districts.

I therefore urge the Secretary of State to put forward more serious arguments indicating that our amendment is not worth anything, that it would not serve the interests of the provinces, that it would not facilitate understanding and the establishment of bilingual districts. I would ask all those who have heard the points made by members of this side of the house to consider them thoroughly before rejecting the amendment.

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to sit on the committee which studied this legislation, and I approved a very similar amendment that was being discussed: I should therefore like to support also the amendment before us.

Furthermore, I should like to start by calling your attention to the remarks of the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) which, in my opinion, are shallow, not to say irresponsible. Therefore, as the question of my colleague, the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) indicated, if we do not have in the house the same opportunities to look fully into a bill or some clauses of a bill, we might wonder what we are doing here.

Ten or fifteen members of a committee cannot have the infused knowledge required to make decisions on behalf of 264 members, all the more as a member of the committee might be absent when a clause is being considered. As the N.D.P. and the Ralliement créditiste have only one representative each, it might happen that the views of their electors are not expressed on account of their representative's absence. And that can happen. Therefore, it is extremely important that we make a thorough study here in the house of some disputable points, for instance the one before us.

I cannot understand the position taken by the government. The very existence of Canada seems to be denied. The true nature of Canada appears to be ignored. Indeed, is not Canada a confederation of the ten provinces and the Northwest Territories? Is that not Canada? If so, then, let us take that fact into account while considering a legislation as important as we are led to believe.

Mr. Speaker, my argument is based on the fact that we have to ask ourselves what Canada is. Then, if Canada, from a geographical point of view, is made up of ten provinces plus the Northwest Territories, it is only normal that the Advisory Board be made up of commissioners from each province and the Territories. That would be quite normal.