

because the interpretation of section 133 of the British North America Act will be entrusted to a group of civil servants. The chief translators or one of the translators may take a fancy to say that section 133 does not permit or compel him to translate such or such document; he will be free to interpret the law as he likes. And what authority will parliament or the various departments have to induce that translator to construe the spirit of the law such as we have always understood it to this day.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that this bill, not only is far from giving additional rights to the French language but is dangerous on account of the false interpretation that might be placed on the laws which presently guarantee the use of the French language in this parliament and throughout the Dominion. Further than that, I think we should not give this measure the interpretation that has been given to it by the hon. member for Labelle the other day and by the Solicitor General to-night.

At any rate, I am sure that the hon. Secretary of State (Mr. Cahan) when he drafted this bill, never thought of granting additional rights to the French language in this country. The object as expressed in the explanatory notes annexed to the bill contains nothing of the kind, and there is not a word about it in the bill itself. These explanatory notes state why the measure was submitted and the results which are expected from it. According to these explanatory notes and the information given to us by the hon. Secretary of State when he presented this measure the other day, it is a matter of efficient translation and economy. The hon. Solicitor General has seen fit to tell us that the efficiency will consist mainly in the simultaneous publication of various reports and documents which must be translated. I believe the bill itself says the very opposite. Section 3 deals with a Bureau of Translation whose duties will be to translate reports that have already been published. We cannot translate a report before it is published and there is no doubt that nothing in the bill provides for a simultaneous publication in both languages. If such a clause were inserted in the bill I might approve of the measure in so far as efficiency is concerned. But no such thing appears in the bill; it is quite the contrary.

Mention was also made of improving the translation. Some are under the impression that all translations are alike. The present translators of the various departments carry out their work to the best of their ability.

Either they are efficient or they are not. If we employ the same translators, there will be no change in the translation. If the translation is well done, to-day, I do not see the necessity for this bill.

A more fair distribution of the work was alluded to. I do not think that the work can be better distributed since it is distributed among the various departments which have their own translators. Each department has its bilingual character owing to the presence of its translators; if these are removed we destroy the bilingual character of the departments and create a sole bilingual bureau, in the parliament buildings.

Let us examine the constitutional side of the question. This bill concentrates in a bureau all departmental translation as well as that of the two chambers of parliament. This provision is the most amazing part of the bill. I fail to see how the two chambers of parliament can be controlled by a bureau for translation and forsake their prerogatives. According to the strict letter of the constitution, I fail to see why parliament should thus divest itself of its prerogatives. The government, the House of Commons as well as the Senate should have under their control the translation, especially that of the debates.

According to this bill, the house will lose control over the translation, which is so important to parliament. I repeat that this bill, in my opinion, does in no way increase the prestige of the French language; quite the contrary, there is danger that the act will be so interpreted as to turn against us instead of in our favour. We shall always have to carry on the struggle to maintain the rights of the French language, so long as we remain a bilingual country and are in the minority. We must, therefore, always stand by our guns, if we wish to uphold our rights. I do not think that this bill will add a dot to the rights of our language; on the contrary, it may constitute a danger; all will depend on how the translators themselves interpret the act. On the other hand, if the bill stipulated that the publication of the various reports and documents, both in French and English, shall be simultaneous, if the bill provided that all parliamentary documents, even those which are not stipulated in section 133 of the British North America Act, shall be translated if parliament was given control over the translations, especially those connected with the debates of the house, well truly, I think I would endorse this bill and would not feel justified in voting against it. However, nothing of the kind is to be found in this bill.