

that the correspondence received in French should be answered in French, and answered expeditiously. That being done, I imagine the object of my hon. friend would be accomplished. I would not like to say just what condition you would create by appointing two secretaries. I am free to admit that it looks reasonable that we should have an assistant secretary with a portion of the board, when the secretary is with some other portion of the board. But the main object is to have the work done efficiently. I did hope to discuss this matter with the new chairman of the board. I may say frankly that so far as I am personally concerned I intend to be largely guided by what he thinks are the necessities of the case, impressing upon him the fact that nothing must be left undone to make the work very efficient for all parts of Canada.

Mr. MONK. I am satisfied with the declaration of the hon. minister provided he follows it up. The suggestion has been made to me by a number of people residing far from Montreal. There has been a recent decision in the province of Quebec that it is not before our own courts that a farmer, for instance, must go if he wants a crossing. That is a recent decision in the district of Terrebonne, from which we must infer that a farmer who wants a crossing can no longer address himself to the ordinary tribunals of his province, but he must communicate either directly or through lawyers with the court. That opens up a very large field for correspondence, and if the party interested does not want to employ a lawyer and wishes to correspond directly with the board, he should be able to do so. Perhaps the accountant mentioned by my hon. friend might be named a joint secretary for the purposes of French correspondence, giving him a position which would not be equal to that of the regular secretary. But I think somebody ought to be appointed specially for that work. The present secretary should not have to rely upon such assistance as he may get from other members of the board to translate letters and forward answers.

Mr. LEMIEUX. I might remind my hon. friend that there is at present a member of the commission who is a French Canadian, the Hon. Mr. Bernier. I am informed that all the correspondence in French is forwarded to Mr. Bernier, who has his own secretary, and who answers according to the views of the board. As regards the sittings of the board in exclusively French districts, I may say to my hon. friend that not very long ago the board was called upon to sit in the county of Bonaventure. The sitting took place at Port Daniel, if I mistake not, and was presided over by

Mr. GRAHAM.

the Hon. Mr. Bernier, who was accompanied by his secretary. The proceedings were all in French and everybody was pleased with them. I do not say this to prevent the Minister of Railways from appointing an assistant secretary who would be the assistant of the whole board; on the contrary, I think it would be wise on the part of the Board of Railway Commissioners to have a permanent assistant secretary. But I wish to remark that there is actually no complaint on that score against the board, because, as my hon. friend knows, Mr. Bernier is a French Canadian, and a very able man too. There is no grievance on the part of our people in the province of Quebec in regard to the use of the French language before the board.

Mr. MONK. I do not pretend that there is any grievance in regard to the constitution of the board. But we are criticising the estimates, and when we find that we are paying large sums every year to gentlemen of the profession who represent the Crown before the Exchequer Court and before the Board of Railway Commissioners, a duty which naturally falls upon the Solicitor General, and when we find that his place is taken before the tribunals of the country in which the Crown is sued, by other lawyers, it seems the proper moment to claim that we should have a French secretary on the Board of Railway Commissioners. Mr. Cartwright may be able to translate the French language, and there may be others besides Mr. Primeau who can understand and translate it. But I go further, and I say that we should have a French secretary, in the province of Quebec we expect that all the clerks of courts shall understand both languages, because we are a mixed population. There are a great many matters brought before it and more particularly as these matters are brought before it by men who are lawyers by men who want a crossing, who want the assistance of the board and by municipalities, they prefer to write directly to the board. It seems to me the most reasonable thing in the world that one of the secretaries of that tribunal should be familiar with our language and I am satisfied from the assurance given by the minister that he will have the matter looked into. It is a matter that requires immediate attention.

Mr. LEMIEUX. As the hon. gentleman (Mr. Monk) raised another point, as regards the Exchequer Court, I am bound to say that it is not fair to criticise the present incumbent of the Exchequer Court as I have seen him criticised in some of the newspapers. As a matter of fact, the present incumbent, Mr. Justice Cassels, was born