

*House of Commons*

the constitutional provisions of the British North America Act and giving to them within this chamber the authority of this house so that hon. members in general will be able to make an even more complete contribution to the debates of the house than has been previously possible. Instead of reiterating those things and once more covering the ground and arguments that were advanced for the setting up of the committee, I simply rest the case with what I have stated.

(Translation):

**Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in supporting this motion.

(Text):

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of simultaneous translation perhaps I had better say that I have just announced my support of this resolution. May I add that this resolution, if it is adopted, will represent a change in the procedures under which we conduct our debates in this house and an alteration of the facilities of the house for such purpose, and I suggest this is the proper way to proceed in a change of this kind.

The Prime Minister has pointed out that hon. members over the years have spoken of their wish for the adoption of a simultaneous translation system, although no formal consideration was given to the matter in this house. As far as I am able to determine, the first time it was placed on the order paper was in the session of 1956, when a resolution dealing with simultaneous translation was put forward by the then hon. member for Roberval, Mr. Georges Villeneuve; but at that time it was not debated. However, as the Prime Minister has indicated, a similar resolution was put on the order paper by the then Liberal member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm, Mr. Maurice Breton in 1957. That resolution which was debated and carried by the house, called for a special committee to study simultaneous translation in this chamber and also in all parliamentary committees of the house. That study has been made, and this resolution represents the proposed action of the government in respect of it in so far as simultaneous translation in the House of Commons is concerned.

I do not intend to delay action on this matter for any great length of time, because in the discussion which took place on this question on November 25, 1957, in this house beginning at page 1456 of *Hansard* for that date, I expressed my views on this matter the report of which commences at page 1475. I do not think there is any need for me to repeat those views at this time, because I made my own position perfectly clear then.

I hope this resolution will commend itself to all hon. members of the house. It is not only of a practical importance but also of importance in the sense that it recognizes the absolute equality in this house of the two official languages of parliament. That we can all welcome. But it is also a recognition of the disability under which some hon. members of the house labour—and I confess I am one of them, Mr. Speaker—the disability of not being completely fluent in both languages. Perhaps like the Prime Minister, and given a few minutes' notice, I can express myself in if not classic perhaps understandable French and, like him, I have reached the position where I can understand in a general way most of the speeches in the French language in this house. Nevertheless the fact that we have a resolution of this kind on the order paper is unfortunately a recognition that we are not all equally fluent in both languages.

I hope the time will come and that it will not be too long in coming—because I think we are making progress in that direction—when simultaneous translation will not be needed and the facilities for that purpose can be taken out of the house as not needed and moved over to the museum or the public archives. At the present time, however, it will be helpful to have them in the house in that it will enable all hon. members who suffer the disability I have mentioned to follow the debates of this house in the language other than that in which they are fluent. Perhaps it will even add to the progress in bilingualism which is being made in this house.

I have not been here as long as some hon. members, but anyone who has been here for a number of years must have been struck by the fact that very great progress has been made in that regard. The installation of these facilities may also help in that connection, because when a speech is being made in English it will help us to get the French translation if we do not agree with what is being said in English. I am sure we can benefit ourselves through listening to what is being said through the translation.

As the Prime Minister said, a simultaneous translation system has been in operation at the United Nations almost since its inception. It is essential to that organization, and the translation is made in five languages. One thing we have learned at the United Nations, and this was mentioned in the debate last November, is that simultaneous translation is no easy thing to do. Simultaneous translators have to be men of great skill. They have to be trained and indeed to have great knowledge of the two languages. The value of this change if it is made, as we all hope