

*Financial Administration Act*

members will have more control than ever over public funds.

I sincerely believe that this bill is a step in the right direction. You will, of course, object and say that it is not perfect. The federal government is a very large plant, a huge machinery, so big, in fact, that I cannot understand how the hon. member for Lotbinière can think a member could even try to control every thing that goes on in the government. I would rather see a member specializing in his field, sitting on certain committees and trying to scrutinize and pass through a sieve all the government expenditures.

The hon. member for Lotbinière made earlier a remark which was out of order but which I feel I should answer. I share his view, to a certain extent, but I do not agree with the way he puts the problem and finds answers such as when he refers to the scandal of the lack of high-ranking French-speaking public servants.

I am, like him, one of those who deplore the fact that there are not more French-speaking people in higher positions, in the top salary brackets. But I also feel that we will not solve this problem by blaming the government for it, and that is where I disagree with him. I believe it is a problem we can solve by trying to convince the qualified people at home—when I say at home, I mean the province of Quebec—to accept to serve here, which will be something rather new in the civil service, since for more than 100 years—and I know what I am talking about because I have tried myself for many years to get some efficient people to work for the federal government, some objections were justified.

I am not saying, however, that the hon. member for Lotbinière is wrong in emphasizing, for instance, that there may be conflicts of personality. There are certainly, in some departments, senior English speaking officials who assist in the promotion of their English speaking friends; that is sure. But that is a human problem that will also crop up when there will be senior French speaking officers. That is a truly human phenomenon, and I agree with the hon. member that it should not exist and that we should take steps to cope with such a situation. I will even go further. I am positive that in the public service, which was created specifically to prevent favouritism, many cases of patronage arise at the officers' level, since those officers are not responsible to the administration.

[Mr. Mongrain.]

As for those French-speaking people who would not hold these senior posts or who would not get big salaries, the best way, I think, to correct this situation is, first, to admit that there has been progress, instead of merely crying shame, which is incredible. For example, a few years ago, nobody would have thought that the commander in chief of the Canadian armed forces could be a French Canadian. That was unheard of. Now, this is indeed a fact. We also have ministers who hold important portfolios as well as deputy ministers whose duties are far from being unimportant. Within the C.B.C. and Air Canada, French Canadians hold important administrative posts.

I understand that there are still some companies that are exceptions. A possible explanation might be the fact that in Quebec, it has not been very long since people began specializing in higher technical fields. We were told, during a whole century, that our calling was an agricultural one. Our seminaries used to train priests, notaries and lawyers, rather than economists, sociologists, engineers and specialists in all fields. For about fifteen years now, thank God, many people have been willing to get into the public service because they realize that employment in the public service pays more than ever. They realize that, today, they get quite a welcome, whereas 25 years ago—I agree on this point with the hon. member for Lotbinière—that was not the case probably. So, there is more proficiency and promotion is granted normally. Besides, I do not believe that it should be granted on the basis of language only; but rather on the basis of proficiency. Therefore, let us encourage our people in Quebec that are proficient to enter the public service so that they can show their abilities. And if they are victims of discrimination at the level of their immediate superiors, such cases can be discussed with the ministers concerned.

• (4:50 p.m.)

For example, I could tell the hon. member for Lotbinière that at the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, which he mentioned earlier, I was personally aware of cases of discrimination. I did not believe that the best solution was to bring the problem before the house. So, I went to see the minister concerned and gave him evidence of what had come to my attention. He summoned all the interested parties, and I feel that the problem will be solved shortly. If I had brought the case to the attention of the house,