

Official Languages

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Certainly, the elimination of proposed subclause four puts a different complexion on the matter. We would like to let this stand and have the house proceed to something else.

Mr. Lewis: Could the hon. member for Carignan not buy the Minister of Justice a meal over the weekend and persuade him before he sees the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald)?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): He was not in a very good mood today.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): We would like to look at this from the point of view of the house rules.

Mr. Hales: Would the minister accept a question? Supposing an hon. member of the opposition wished to direct a question in the house with regard to the activities of the commissioner. To whom would this question be directed if the commissioner does not report to any particular minister?

Mr. Baldwin: That is academic. We do not get any answers, anyway.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Presumably the proper time for a question to be asked with respect to the conduct of the commissioner would be when the report was tabled in the house. Then, the house would be left to its own procedure.

Mr. Horner: Oh, come on. You can answer better than that.

Mr. Hales: Perhaps the minister did not follow my question. It may be hypothetical but this situation could arise. Suppose I or anyone else, as a Member of Parliament, wished to direct a question in the house during the question period in connection with what was being done under the official languages legislation, to which minister would that question be directed?

An hon. Member: The Prime Minister.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I would think so, yes. The Prime Minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Is it agreed that this clause stand as suggested by the minister?

Mr. Baldwin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the next amendment stands in the [Mr. Lewis.]

name of my hon. friend from Calgary North. Unfortunately, he is not here at this particular time. He is away on a very important mission. I ask that the same courtesy be extended to us as we extended to the Minister of Justice, that we stand the next one, No. 5, and proceed with motion No. 6.

• (5:20 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River) moved:

That Bill C-120, an act respecting the status of the official languages of Canada, be amended by deleting clause 38 thereof and substituting the following:

"38. (1) The right to speak a language other than either of the two official languages shall not be restrained or restricted in its natural development in any way.

(2) The Governor in Council may by order in council enter into an agreement with the government of any province which has been authorized by legislation so to do, for the purpose of encouraging natural development of any such minority language especially as regards the use of such language in matters of education."

He said: Mr. Speaker, let me briefly recapitulate the circumstances leading up to the motion that is now before this house. When the B and B commission made its report one of the commissioners, Professor Rudnicki, made what might be called a dissenting report which is attached to the main B and B commission report. In it Professor Rudnicki made certain claims and suggestions with regard to the languages of other minority groups. He went a very great distance beyond what was expressed in the B and B report.

When the bill was drafted and brought down, the government saw fit to introduce clause 38, which deals with this particular issue. So that this clause might appear for the benefit of those who might read these remarks, clause 38 provides:

Nothing in this act shall be construed as derogating from or diminishing in any way any legal or customary right or privilege acquired or enjoyed either before or after the coming into force of this act with respect to any language that is not an official language.

Despite opinions that may have been expressed to the contrary, this is simply a question of saying that anybody who wants to speak another language may do so without penalty. No less is contained in the principle implied and expressly indicated in clause 38.