

*House of Commons*

knowing my interest in Moliere, made a presentation to me of the complete works of that author. This edition was in both the French and English languages, the French work appearing on the one page while on the opposite page appeared the English translation. The interesting thing was not the fact of this presentation but the fact that on the forepage it bore the notation that the volume came from the library of Sir John A. Macdonald. On another page was revealed the fact that it came to the donor from the estate of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, his grand-uncle, who apparently had received this work after the passing of Sir John A. Macdonald.

That is quite an interesting bit of history. First, Sir John A. Macdonald followed the course of having both English and French works in his library; and second, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who through the years bore with great distinction the title of Prime Minister of Canada, was never above referring to the great contribution made by Sir John A. Macdonald to confederation and to the people of Canada.

I would like to thank hon. members in all parts of the house for their kind personal references in connection with this motion. While this question has been discussed over the years, for some reason or other there have been continuing delays, and the fact that we have changed our opinions has been illustrated today by the excellent contribution, if I may say so, of the hon. member for Hull. He indicated that he possibly had held some fears that the installation of this system might result in a diminution of the desire on the part of hon. members—or at least might lessen the possibility of achievement—to obtain facility in both languages.

I very well recall a speech the hon. member made in this House of Commons in the year 1953 with reference to this subject. I looked up this speech and it is recorded at page 510 of *Hansard* for December 1, 1953, that he said the following:

—I do not agree with the suggestion that there should be established in this chamber a system of translation similar to that which they have at the United Nations. Such a system would tend to stop efforts to speak the second language.

That was the considered opinion of the hon. member at that time, and today he very clearly pointed out that he fears the system may have the effect to which he referred in 1953.

With respect to the question as to who first brought this matter before the House of Commons, it would be a valueless pursuit to attempt to ascertain the identity of that person; but in recent years one hon. member who has most strongly brought forward this matter has been the hon. member for Restigouche-Madawaska (Mr. Van Horne). In a

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

speech recorded at page 953 of *Hansard* for February 7, 1956, for instance, he outlined various grievances, as he called them, and said the following:

I come from a French speaking riding and when I come here I should like to speak in French. I feel there should be translation facilities in the house which would permit every member to hear me in English simultaneously when I speak in French, just as they have at the United Nations.

That the system will be successful I have no doubt. As the hon. member for Hull mentioned, such a system is used in the Israeli parliament, and I had an opportunity to witness its operation in that body. I found this to be a most revealing experience, for in that parliament there are only four or five Arab members, as I recall it, yet the speeches were simultaneously translated into the Hebrew and Arabic languages to the end that all hon. members could readily understand the proceedings.

I am not going to deal with other steps that may be taken in future to assure the complete recognition of bilingualism under the constitution of our country, but I can say that in taking this step we in this government believe that while it is easy to talk about the subject of Canadian unity, in bringing in this motion a major step toward its achievement is assured.

I thank all hon. members again for their references to my stand in this connection, which is not a new one, and I thank all of them for the degree of support which is apparent for this motion.

Motion agreed to.

**NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION****CONSTITUTION OF COMMISSION—REPEAL OF PRESENT LEGISLATION**

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister)** moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure respecting the development and improvement of the national capital region and in relation thereto:

1. To provide for the constitution of a national capital commission and to repeal the Federal District Commission Act;
2. To provide for the objects, purposes and powers of the commission; and
3. To enact such financial provisions as may be necessary to accomplish the purposes of the act.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Rea in the chair.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Chairman, possibly it might be well for me to outline generally what has taken place with respect to the question of setting up a national capital commission, repealing the Federal District Commission Act, and to outline generally the plans of the government as contemplated by