

PARLIAMENTARY STATUS OF THE GENERAL TRANSLATION BRANCH

The Branch owes its parliamentary status to the fact that it was created for the purpose of translating parliamentary papers. Departmental reports fell in that category inasmuch as they became records of Parliament after being tabled. It was on this account that our translators were classified as Parliamentary translators by the Civil Service Commission some eight years ago.

DISTRIBUTION OF WORK

By reason of its diversity, the work is distributed amongst the men best versed in the particular subject under translation. Most translators have specialized in certain fields and they are entrusted, in so far as possible, with the care of translating, checking or revising all texts falling within their particular scope of knowledge.

Every translator, although specialized on one or more subjects, is more or less a generalist who can assist in other spheres when required. While short documents are usually translated by one man only in order to ensure perfect uniformity, both in terms and phraseology, long reports are, however, distributed amongst several members of the staff. It may so happen that a translator may not be intimately acquainted with the subject to be dealt with, but he can at least prepare a first draft of the text and the technical part of it can easily be handled later by a colleague who is more familiar with the subject. Our work calls for close co-operation. What may be found difficult to one translator may readily be understood by another. Should a particular subject be entirely new to all translators, although this seldom happens, they can get in touch with the officer or department who prepared the document, or they may obtain the information necessary from our library or the Library of Parliament which is close at hand.

Thus, with co-ordination of efforts, none are left idle, all translators being fully occupied either in technical or in other duties.

INTRICACY OF WORK

Every branch of knowledge involves a special terminology. Law has a language all its own, so has medicine and natural science. There are accepted forms which must be observed in drafting Orders in Council, in drawing up Rules and Regulations, Deeds and Contracts, in writing official or polite letters. Commerce itself carries a tremendous vocabulary and also special expressions that one must forget in writing a speech or a pamphlet of a literary character.

The many subjects embraced by government publications cover a large vocabulary which at times demand from the translators extensive research. Familiarity with the subject under translation is, therefore, indispensable. Many years of experience and study are necessary before a man even with a good bilingual education can become an accurate translator. Translation is not in any way mechanical. It is only when a man has thoroughly specialized in a subject that he can attempt to translate at sight. Even then, a specialist could not render into another language in a few days, technical or scientific works which, oftentimes, have taken experts weeks or even months to prepare. Translation of this kind has to be done slowly and with great care. It cannot be dictated to a stenographer in the same manner as, for instance, a letter or a memorandum.

PROFICIENCY OF THE STAFF

With a view to improving their knowledge, and in order to become acquainted with the terms which apply to new inventions, our translators must keep continually studying technology by reading scientific magazines and books