

in these times is an important consideration. I want to point out to the hon. members of the House who speak the French tongue that there is not the slightest disposition on the part of either the Speaker or the staff to do other than to see that the French-speaking officials get ample justice and fair treatment. I think that a careful examination of the officers of the House and the salaries paid to them will go to show that they are getting exceedingly generous treatment at the hands of the country. I would therefore ask the hon. gentleman not to press for the appointment of a French head for this branch, which is not necessary, but to assent to the proposal which is made solely in the interest of efficiency and economy.

Mr. J. A. C. ETHIER: I have not the slightest doubt that you, Mr. Speaker, are acting in a perfectly straightforward fashion and that you have no desire to interfere with the privileges and the rights pertaining to the use of the French language in this House. Those rights and privileges have been very distinctly recognized in the past, and no less an authority than the late Dr. Bourinot, in the last edition of his work on Parliamentary Procedure, notes and states very clearly that the rights of the French Journals should be equal to those of the English Journals. If there is any doubt on the point let me quote from section 133 of the British North America Act which provides as follows:

Either the English or the French language may be used by any person in the Debates of the Houses of the Parliament of Canada and of the Houses of the Legislature of Quebec; and both these languages shall be used in the respective Records and Journals of those Houses.

The right there laid down was recognized in this Parliament in 1917 when I believe Mr. Chapleau was superannuated. That gentleman was the chief editor of the French Journals and the position vacated by his superannuation I understand is still unfilled. Now it is suggested that there should be only one Chief of Journals. The official occupying that position is an English-speaking gentleman who is not conversant with the French language. True he will have a French-Canadian as his assistant but what about the salary attached to the position? When this classification goes before the Civil Service Commission the commission will be bound by it, although the salary is not what it should be for the French-Canadian official who occupies the position of assistant. That is what we are objecting to and why we are

[Mr. Speaker.]

insisting upon adherence to the principle already stated by my hon. friend from Beauce.

Mr. SPEAKER: The committee must bear in mind that although in this instance the head of the branch is an English-speaking official that merely so happens. I can direct the attention of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Ethier) to the circumstances that within the last few months the head of the Stationery Branch who was English-speaking passed away and a French-speaking gentleman was appointed in his stead.

Mr. BELAND: The principle of promotion was followed in that case.

Mr. SPEAKER: Quite so. It means that the member of a staff, whether he be French or English, must take his turn in promotion. No doubt in the course of time the head of the Journals may be French-speaking, but in the present instance the senior officer in that branch, a man who is a wonderfully efficient public servant, happens to be English-speaking, and when the vacancy occurred he was appointed to the head of his branch.

Mr. DEVLIN: I never like to take any part in a discussion where a question affecting language is concerned.

Mr. GERVAIS: Why?

Mr. DEVLIN: It is somewhat of a sensitive matter with people generally. However I believe in respecting the rights of all minorities where such rights exist. The French-speaking people of this country have the right to speak either language in this House. It is simply a matter of choice what language shall be used. I may get up and speak English one moment and then if I so wish I can speak French the next moment. While section 133 of the British North America Act makes the use of either language optional for debating purposes, it provides that the Journals and Votes and Proceedings shall be printed in both languages. That being so, if you make a distinction and say that the Votes and Proceedings shall be printed first in the English language and afterwards translated into French you are placing the latter language upon a footing of inferiority as compared with the English language. When I say that I know how sensitive people generally are in the matter of questions of language I feel that I can speak freely upon the subject. I know the feelings of my French-speaking friends and of my French-Canadian friends, and the moment you pass this particular item as it