

Supply—Secretary of State

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the Department of External Affairs reflects the cultural character of a country, and it would be important, particularly in that department in Canada, that candidates be bilingual so they can assert, on a world-wide level, the bilingual and bi-racial character of our country.

I know, Mr. Chairman, that the minister has endeavoured to create a school where French will be taught. I think that school is located in the province of Quebec.

But I am wondering if the fact that that school is run with public funds is fair and reasonable since the Canadian government, supposedly to help our English speaking compatriots, puts at their disposal professors paid by the government to teach French to civil servants also paid by the government during their working hours.

Yet, Mr. Chairman, French Canadians had to spend their own money for the courses they had to take to learn English.

That fact may not be of prime importance but it is worth mentioning.

I wish to point out that there are at the present time in all the departments of the federal government deficiencies in the French section of the information services. I think there should be some way of improving the situation.

I have another suggestion: That the translators and interpreters, who are bilingual and carry out important and indispensable work for the government be given a higher salary than they are receiving now.

I also ask the minister whether there is no means of increasing the number of translators, so that all the house committee reports might be published simultaneously in their English and French versions, and all other government publications be issued at the same time in both languages, under a single cover. In this way, there would be no exceptions, and the minister would be sure that French and English publications were issued simultaneously in every department, as they would be under one and the same cover.

Mr. Chairman, those were the few remarks I wanted to make in the interest of national unity.

I feel that this constructive action would make it possible to stem the separatist wave which is now on the upsurge in some parts of the country.

A last remark. Does the government still intend to allow civil servants to incorporate as a union, like the other workers of the

country, in order to negotiate a labour agreement?

I know that several members of this house would be happy if there were such legislation.

I would be glad to know what the minister intends to do so far as bilingualism is concerned in the federal civil service.

[Text]

Mr. Nesbitt: Mr. Chairman, there are a few observations I would like to make to the Secretary of State on the question of the civil service commission. The minister is in a rather unique cabinet position inasmuch as he transmits messages to, or replies in this house on behalf of, two creatures, or perhaps I should say creations, of parliament, one being the civil service commission and the other the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. On the latter creation of parliament I shall have some observations to make later on, but on the civil service commission I have a few to make at the present time.

Mr. Fisher: Among a dozen others.

Mr. Nesbitt: Yes; as the hon. member for Port Arthur says, among about a dozen others.

When the civil service was created it was my understanding that the intention—and it is a very commendable one—was to get rid of what had become a black mark on the face of Canada, namely political patronage in the civil service. In former days I am told that every time the government changed while everyone in the government service was not removed most of the important jobs changed hands. The result, of course, was that it eventually became impossible to get people of any competence to do these jobs, and no one for one moment wants to see a return to that state of affairs.

On the other hand, I think in its efforts to make the civil service commission completely independent of political patronage—and as I say I think the theory behind this is very commendable—the civil service commission itself has bent over backwards almost to the point of breaking in half in order to try to show that it is not influenced by any kind of political patronage. Those of us here who have sat on both sides of the house know that this is true; as far as political influence is concerned I have heard of very little political patronage in the civil service commission in connection with making appointments.

However, with the good which may go with this sort of arrangement there is also the bad. In order to keep political inter-