

Judges Act

might consult with such a committee in private and in confidence about appointments. After the appointments were made the committee could then comment favourably upon them. It seems to me that the advantage in such an arrangement would be the general knowledge in the profession that consultation was taking place and that appointments were being made without regard to political affiliation. In addition, of course, it would relieve the minister of press criticism with regard to the political aspect and also the result sometimes obtained in that appointees turn out to be somewhat less than the ultimate in the carrying out of their duties.

It seems to me that this is something which can be handled in a purely non-political way. All of us have the same objective, to surround the bench with the greatest possible degree of protection and independence. A real contribution could be made by the Minister of Justice during his term of office by departing from the old way and bringing in this new method of appointing people to the bench. I think this would be a great step forward. It would be a tremendous credit to the minister and it would be a real memento of his term as Minister of Justice.

[Translation]

Mr. Forest: Mr. Chairman, I shall not take long, because I do not want to delay unduly the passing of this resolution. As already mentioned, the appointment of three new judges to the superior court of the province of Quebec will certainly be most welcome, first of all by the bar, and especially by the people who, for several years now, have been asking that the number of judges of the Quebec superior court be increased. The number of judges has certainly not grown, in the last few years, in keeping with the increase of population.

In rural districts, especially, the situation has been abnormal; indeed, when two and even two and a half years elapse before a case is heard, it can rightly be said that justice is being denied, and this does not encourage the population to respect the administration of justice in the land.

I remember how, in 1963, I had the opportunity to congratulate the then minister of justice who had attended to the appointment of another judge in the St. François de Bedford district. I wish to point out to the present Minister of Justice (Mr. Cardin) that, since we have appointed another judge, delays before bringing a case before a court, formerly from two to two and a half years,

were reduced to less than a year. The appointment of one additional judge made that much of an improvement.

The main cause for those delays was a shortage of judges in the province of Quebec. I know that the number of judges and their districts, are based on the province of Quebec, by virtue of the constitution, and that they are appointed and remunerated by the federal government.

I trust that the Minister of Justice will urge his colleagues in the province of Quebec to request a greater number of judges for their province.

Mr. Chairman, we have discussed the appointment of judges. For my part, I wish to congratulate both the present Minister of Justice and his predecessor for the appointments in the province of Quebec. I have heard only praise from the legal profession as to the appointments made by the present Minister of Justice and his predecessor. They were experienced lawyers, respected and trusted by the legal profession, their colleagues and the general public. If such appointments continue to be made, I think there will be no basis for the fears expressed earlier by the hon. members.

I only wish to bring to the attention of the hon. Minister of Justice that the salaries of judges were last increased in 1963. To attract competent lawyers who will be a credit to the high calling of presiding over our courts, the salary will definitely have to be raised so as to entice the best lawyers to leave their private practice and to sit on the bench as a service to society.

I would also ask the Minister of Justice to look after the amendment of the Judges Act so as to improve the pensions for the widows and children of deceased judges.

Mr. Chairman, these are the only comments I wish to make at this stage.

[English]

Mr. Bell (Carleton): I regret exceedingly, Mr. Chairman, that the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond has seen fit to put on record in the house an article by Professor Angus which I venture to suggest constitutes a reflection upon the whole judiciary of Canada. I say to you, sir, that this article is so irresponsible and immoderate in its tone that it really deserves no answer. However, I wish to put to the committee that it is totally devoid of reality. The article suggests that judicial appointments in Canada are a national disgrace. I say that the very contrary is the