

*Official Languages*

move an amendment to the motion which is now on the order paper. I informed him that so far as I was concerned, and I am sure that my colleagues take the same position, I would support the motion as now amended, subject to a small subamendment which I shall move in a moment and which I hope will be acceptable to the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and his associates.

Let me say that toward the conclusion of the sittings of the special committee on this bill I moved a motion that the special committee recommend that all reports tabled before parliament be referred to an appropriate committee. That motion, which is on record in the committee's proceedings, was ruled out of order by the chairman of the special committee. I think, if I may say so, that this was done quite properly because of the very specific terms of reference of the committee. I refer to it merely to say that from the time when this idea was brought to the committee, I personally took the position that I could not accept the proposal that there be a provision in this bill that any motion moved under Standing Order 26 must be accepted by the Speaker. The reason for this is, first, the reason which the member himself gave, that we should not reduce the Speaker's powers in these matters and, second, that in most instances I cannot see the value of a debate on the floor of the house where the commissioner is not present. I said at the special committee that it is much more sensible to refer the commission's report to a committee of parliament where we can call the commissioner before us, interrogate him on his report and find out from him what criteria and principles he applied in carrying out his duties. It seems to me that that is much more desirable than a general debate on the floor of the house before that kind of scrutiny has taken place.

Therefore, I am totally in harmony with the hon. member for Cardigan and the hon. member for Peace River with regard to the principle of their amendments. It seemed to me, in the special committee, and it still seems to me, a little strange to embody that kind of proposal in the act instead of making it a rule of the house that the matter be referred to committee. But I am persuaded—and I do not mind saying it—by the hon. member for Cardigan that there may be value in having this in the bill. Therefore, I will move a subamendment, explain it and add my appeal to the hon. member for Cardigan that the two ministers responsible for piloting this bill, and who are now in the

house, accept his amendment and my subamendment.

I will move in a moment that the words "to a committee designated by the Speaker" be replaced by the words "to an appropriate committee". My reasons are very simple. First, I do not think it is fair to the Speaker to place on him the burden of having to decide to which committee the report is to go at that stage. It seems to me that it is the job of parliament to decide which committee will deal with a particular function under an act of parliament. It is unfair, and, if I may say so without offence, it is not very sensible to lay on the Speaker the duty of deciding to which committee the matter should go. I think that it should be a committee of parliament. Second, I think that the way it is worded "a committee designated by the Speaker", conveys the possibility that there may be a different committee for each report. I hope that there will be either a standing committee or a special committee dealing with this matter only, that is with the reports of the commissioner, or, alternatively, one of the present standing committees, such as, for example, the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, to which these reports would be sent.

I therefore hope that my very simple subamendment is acceptable to the hon. member for Peace River. It seems to me to improve the amendment which he moved. I should like to add my words to those of the hon. member for Cardigan in making a plea to the ministers who are here to accept the amendment and subamendment.

I see a case for saying that a bill should not normally contain such an instruction, but I think the ministers will agree that this is not an ordinary bill and that it is a bill dealing with a very delicate matter. It is a bill which has aroused certain fears, although I have said many times that I am confident that these fears are not justified. It is a bill which requires as careful a scrutiny by parliament as the situation makes necessary. The amendment and the subamendment do not in any way affect the principle of the bill. They do not affect in any way the powers of the commissioner. They do not in any way affect the operation of the bill. They do give a guarantee that the reports of the commissioner will not merely lie on the table of parliament but will be scrutinized by a committee of parliament and, more than that, that the work of the commissioner will be scrutinized through questioning by an appropriate committee of parliament.

[Mr. Lewis.]