

*Official Languages*

question. He and the government want this legislation to be a success. I assume they want it to be understood, appreciated and supported in those areas of Canada where, to say the least, at the present time it has not been welcomed. I cannot imagine any better way of having this whole question examined properly than by sending the reports of the commissioner to a committee where members will be able to ask questions, call witnesses and make a report to the house which can be discussed by the whole house. The result would be twofold. There would be publicity and there would be no feeling that the commissioner's reports were made in secrecy and that persons were adversely affected behind closed doors. This would also give members of this house the opportunity to become fully familiar with the operations of the commission, its activities, the commissioner's duties and how he has discharged them. They in turn would be able to go back to their constituencies and remove any fears which now exist regarding this legislation.

I hope the government will give serious consideration either to accepting the amendment of the hon. member for Peace River or suggesting some alternative procedure which will assure the house that when the commissioner's report is received it will be fully discussed by the members of this house in order that we may have all the facts and in order that suspicions, whether justified or unjustified, can be fully investigated.

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, when this motion was originally before the house, as introduced by the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid), amended with his consent by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), and then amended again by the subamendment proposed by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), I said I would be prepared to consider and reflect upon it.

The official languages commissioner will be in effect a servant of parliament. He will make his report of any adverse investigation to parliament under clause 33 of the bill. Under clause 34 of the bill he will be required to make an annual report to parliament. After very serious reflection we decided we would take the position that we should recommend to the house that the amendment be rejected, for this reason: The House of Commons is master of its own proceedings.

• (12:10 p.m.)

**An hon. Member:** Amazing!

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** It would in our view be very inadvisable to restrict parliament in advance, to tie the hands of parliament in advance, by way of a statute, with regard to how parliament ought to deal with any particular report, in this case the report of the official languages commissioner. We believe that the internal proceedings of the house and its committees should be a matter for the House of Commons of the day to decide in its own good, collective judgment.

We believe that the proceedings of the House of Commons ought not to be delineated by statutory provisions, and we have been unable to find any other statute which so requires. I think parliament has, in its wisdom, always reserved to parliament the right to determine how reports are to be dealt with. A report submitted to parliament under clause 33 by way of a specific investigation or under clause 34 by way of an annual report will be dealt with by parliament as it sees fit. It will be open to the house to examine it under Standing Order 26. It will be in order for the house to examine it by way of reviewing the estimates relating to the commissioner or by way of referring the report, in its judgment, to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs or whatever committee the house should decide, or it could set up a special committee to examine the report. It is not the intention of the government that this report should lie fallow and unattended where it reaches the house.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, could I ask the minister a question?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** Yes.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** The minister says that the house is master of its own destiny. He also knows, of course, that the government, having a majority in the house, can always decide what disposition is to be made of a report that is laid on the table. What does the present administration intend to do with the commissioner's report when it is tabled?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** I cannot say—

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** That is the problem.

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** —because that will depend on what the parliament of the day intends to do with it. But nothing in the subamendment of the hon. member for