

*Supply—Secretary of State*

command, to rise and to protect the greatest public service in the world from that which is being done to it.

**Mr. Valade:** Would the hon. member permit a question. I heard the hon. member for Carleton make reference to some of my past interventions, but I did not clearly understand if he said that I opposed any revision of the act, or something of that nature. I should like him to make it clear, because it is important to me.

**Mr. Bell (Carleton):** Yes, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Sainte-Marie was one of those who, in September 1961, joined in the support of the amendment which I read into the record. He, and I think the hon. member for Hull, were the only members who took exception to section 47 in the form in which it is.

**Mr. Pelletier:** May I put a question to the hon. gentleman. Since he has been defending the principle of unilingualism in the civil service—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh no.

**Mr. Winkler:** Discrimination.

**Mr. Pelletier:**—may I ask him whether he knows many French unilingual civil servants in Ottawa?

**Mr. Bell (Carleton):** Mr. Chairman, it is a total travesty of what I have attempted to say to suggest that I have been defending unilingualism. I know many unilingual French speaking civil servants in Ottawa, many more than the hon. member knows. The ones I know believe in what I have said in this house tonight.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Grégoire:** Mr. Chairman, I listened with a great deal of attention to the speech just made by the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell).

I have never taken him for a fanatic and I still do not want to do so tonight. In my opinion, the comments he made tonight merely reflect a general idea according to which, realizing that the monopoly held by a certain group is flowing away, some people are afraid to lose it to the advantage of all Canadian citizens, both English speaking and French speaking.

The fact that bilingualism is asked for in the civil service does not mean, Mr. Chairman, that competence must first be set aside. Certainly not.

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

• (9:20 p.m.)

What we believe should be a prime criterion for recruiting a civil servant, whether at higher or lower level, is the competence. Only in various degrees of competence—now I am talking only about competence—meaning the factors which can be used to assess the competence of officers in the Canadian civil service; well, language should be one of these factors.

If the employee speaks English only or French only and is bound to meet either French or English speaking public, then I must say to the hon. member for Carleton that bilingualism is a factor of competence for the civil servant who has to speak to his fellow citizens in one or the other of the two languages. It is a criterion of competence. That is why the civil service commission must take this criterion into account in the field of competence, that is bilingualism, as much as all other criteria. That is one of the fields which concern the competence of a civil servant.

I am convinced that, in this connection, the hon. member for Carleton cannot deny the argument I advance that in the case of a senior official dealing with the public bilingualism is a necessary and unavoidable asset of such official's competence.

This being said, Mr. Chairman, it must not be forgotten that we too often see applications—not only in the civil service, but in crown corporations, as I pointed out to the house recently—for instance, in the case of air hostesses, Air Canada, where it was said: Knowledge of English is required, but knowledge of French is a further asset. Why is one language required and another a further asset? Why are not both languages required, since an air hostess is called upon to serve both French and English-speaking Canadians?

When competitions are held within the civil service for positions requiring the official to deal with the public, such as in the Taxation Division, or here, for instance, in the house of commons where there are telephone operators. Four times out of five, the operator will tell you that she speaks English only, not French. If you want a French-speaking operator, you are told to hang up, that you will be called back. You wait 20 minutes before you get an operator who can understand and speak French.

Will the hon. member for Carleton now tell me that employees such as these should not have an increase of 10 per cent and even