

Official Languages

the commissioner to make a report to parliament if parliament is not given an opportunity to discuss and examine it. Where could this better be done than before a committee of the house? I appeal through you, Mr. Speaker, to hon. members on the other side of the house to accept my amendment. What can possibly be wrong with a request of that kind? What possible objection can the government have to it? Is there anything wrong in asking that a committee of the house consider the report of the commissioner? Why would the government be afraid of that? Why should they say this is not a reasonable request?

As I have already said, practically all reports are referred to committees which examine them and report back to parliament. All we ask is that the annual report of the commissioner, as well as any special report he may see fit to make under the powers which will be given to him by the act, be referred to a committee of the house designated by the Speaker. We are not asking anything more than that. We are not asking that the house adjourn to debate the question as a matter of public importance. All we are asking is that we be given the right to examine the report in committee. We suggest there is nothing wrong with that. It is a safeguard. Just as sure as we are sitting in the house today, some people in Canada will feel that if there is no provision for the report to be referred to a committee, if there is no provision in the bill for taking the report off the table, there is something wrong; people will be suspicious about the procedure we are adopting, and they will have every reason to be suspicious.

This is not an unreasonable request, and we therefore very seriously recommend it to the government. The government will not be backing down at all if it accepts the amendment. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) has indicated that he does not see why the house should change any decision arrived at in the special committee set up to study the bill. Let us not forget that the special committee comprised only 12 members of the house, and there are in the house 264 members. Therefore, 252 members did not have a chance to consider this matter in committee.

Surely, the minister was not serious when he suggested the rest of the membership of the house should be denied the privilege of discussing and perhaps adopting some of the things the committee in its wisdom saw fit not to adopt. We recommend to the government, and all members of the house, the amendment as it will be amended by the hon. member for Peace River. I can assure the house

that if the amendment is passed there will be throughout Canada a much better feeling so far as the official languages bill is concerned.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. I would point out that at this stage the hon. member will require the unanimous consent of the house to move that a portion of the amendment be withdrawn.

Mr. Baldwin: With great respect, Mr. Speaker, we are following the practice that was followed on two previous occasions, the last time by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis). Rather than the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid) asking that the amendment he has moved be withdrawn—he would need unanimous consent to substitute another amendment—I am going to move, seconded by the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth), an amendment to the motion of the hon. member for Cardigan. I submit this procedure will be within the four corners of the previous decision of Mr. Speaker.

● (5:00 p.m.)

May I be permitted to read my amendment, following which Your Honour can consider it? I move:

That the motion be amended by:

- (1) deleting the proposed subclause (4); and
- (2) inserting in the proposed subclause (5), next after the word "section", the words "and any report that may be made by him under section 33"; and by renumbering the subclause as subclause (4).

I have a number of quite unofficial copies in English and in French for hon. members who, I know, will be clamouring for them.

May I say before I sit down that the effect of the amendment will be precisely as set out by the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid), to nullify the effect of the proposed subclause (4) which permits a member of the house, under certain conditions set out more particularly in subclause (4), to let a report be brought before the house. My amendment would leave the remedy exclusively in subclause (5), namely an automatic direction to the commissioner that the report be referred to parliament and dealt with there. That is the effect of the amendment which I moved.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. McQuaid) was kind enough to inform me earlier of his intention, and the intention of his colleague to