

*Official Languages*

leader of the hon. member for Dauphin, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield).

[English]

**Mr. Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, would the minister allow me one question?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard):** The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) on a question of the minister.

**Mr. Alexander:** I just wish to ask the minister one question. I was very impressed with the minister and his usual brilliant footwork in bringing about—I shall use the word of the Minister of Justice—the exposé of the importance of the bill. I stand behind the bill with certain qualifications, but of course I wonder why this government does not want to appreciate the—

**Some hon. Members:** Question, question.

● (9:10 p.m.)

**Mr. Alexander:** What amazes me is that we now have an opportunity to do something, but the hon. member and the government do not seem to realize that we are discussing an important matter. I will get to the question and hon. members will have an opportunity to hear it. I am very impressed with the minister's statement to the effect that if anybody wants to be bilingual he can become bilingual. I take issue with that statement.

What I should like to know is what happens after a civil servant has been involved in one avocation for a period of 15 years and has not only shown a willingness but an integrity in his desire to become efficient in a second language, but for some God known reason cannot become proficient in that second language? This individual might well have all the attributes necessary to handle the particular job he is now holding, but what happens to him after he has attempted with all his God given attributes to become bilingual and cannot? The answer to this question will perhaps clarify this whole matter, particularly in the minds of a great many people in Canada. I hope the minister can answer it, keeping in mind the importance of a lifetime of work on the part of one individual in one particular avocation who cannot become bilingual.

**Mr. Pelletier:** Mr. Speaker, I should first of all like to tell the hon. member it is always possible that there may be exceptions. I would say that for a man who was, let us say—I am

[Mr. Pelletier.]

sure this is what the hon. member had in mind—only able to speak French, and he is applying—

**Mr. Alexander:** Or English.

**Mr. Pelletier:** I am sure the hon. member had in mind a unilingual French speaking civil servant who would like to—

**Mr. Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**Mr. Pelletier:** That is not what you had in mind?

**An hon. Member:** Do not be so facetious. You are not good at being funny.

**Mr. Alexander:** After I make a statement it is amazing to me that the minister is able to read my mind. I say, with all due respect, that it was most unfair of the minister to say he thought I was thinking along a particular line. I was not thinking of anyone in particular. I had in mind a person who had given 15 years of his life to a particular vocation, had shown a willingness and an integrity to learn a second language but could not do so. What would happen to such a person who had the scholastic background and know-how to handle the position which that individual aspired to but could not learn a second language? I think it is very unfair for the minister to attribute to me the thought that I was trying to channel my ideas in a specific direction.

**Mr. Pelletier:** I cannot understand the objection of the hon. member. I was taking for granted that he was thinking of a French speaking civil servant.

**An hon. Member:** Why?

**Mr. Pelletier:** I thought the hon. member was a very generous man and wanted to put himself in the boots of an individual who spoke another language. If he is thinking of an individual who only speaks French my answer to the hon. member is very simple. If that individual were among the few exceptions who found it really impossible over a period of five, ten or fifteen years to learn a second language, he would still have access to other positions.

Let me refer to a specific case. Let us consider a unilingual French-speaking civil servant who wanted to be the head of the income tax office in Toronto. Being French speaking, he would still have access to 25 per cent of similar jobs. If he were English speaking he would still have access to 75 per cent of these