

end. I have not thought to take away from the minority in the Northwest any of their rights. My position has been put by my opponents in that way over and over again in this House and the country. That is not my position. I have advocated leaving to the people of the Northwest Territories the power to deal with this question because I believe it is the right way to deal with it under the constitution. I have said that if the people of the new provinces in the Northwest are willing to extend the rights of the minority to any extent to which they may see fit I regard that as a matter with which they are to deal and I have not one word of criticism to offer in regard to their action in that respect. That is my position. It seems to me that it is a plain and definite position, but I do not understand the argument and the position of those who say that there are pledges which ought to be regarded as sacred and which ought to be maintained and who at the same moment stand up and vote against my hon. friend from Labelle and my hon. friend from Beauharnois when they seek to enact legislation which would carry out those pledges. Some criticism has been uttered in regard to my own position. It is said that I am too technical, that I pay too much regard to the constitution, that you must look at the constitution not in the light of the exact words which are employed or in the light of the legal meaning which is to be attached to these words, but that you must look at it in some broader, wider and more generous light. I do not know where limitations or qualifications of that kind would lead us. That is my difficulty. You must in the end determine by some rule what the constitution means, and I venture to say that in so far as the interests of minorities in this country are concerned it is very much safer to adhere to the true spirit and meaning of the constitution than to depart from it. If an invasion of the constitution is demanded or is granted to-day in the interest of the minority in this country, who shall know to what extent a demand of that kind may be made at some time in the future on behalf of the majority in this country? For example, would we all be quite willing that the complete and unlimited power of dealing with the British North America Act should be conferred upon this parliament? There may be a good deal of question as to whether or not all of us would concur in that view, and yet, as far as the constitution of these new provinces is concerned, that is a view which has been impressed by the government upon parliament through the law officers of the Crown. Of course, we cannot really give ourselves power by merely legislating, but the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) and other hon. gentlemen in this House have suggested, as we all know, that if there lacks in parliament the power to pass this law it is the simplest thing in the world to go to the imperial parliament and have

that power made good. Well, I doubt a little whether that will be found a good principle to act upon.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. That has not been acted upon by me.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. It has been acted upon by the hon. ex-Minister of the Interior who has imposed clause 16, No. 2 upon the administration; and if he is able to impose his views upon the administration in that regard who shall tell us that he may not be able to impose his views upon the administration in regard to the matter to which I have just referred? I would ask my hon. friend (Mr. Bourassa) who is a constitutional student and who pays more attention, and properly so, to these matters than do some other hon. gentlemen in this House; I would ask him as a constitutional student: whether or not he would think that a course of that kind would probably tend to the welfare of minorities in this country or to the stability of the Canadian constitution? I would think it much better, everything considered, to stand by the agreement and compact which we made in 1867. It may not be thoroughly satisfactory to us in every respect or on every occasion, but it is dangerous to tamper with it or to meddle with it or to suggest, as has been suggested by that very prominent gentleman to whom I have made reference, that if there is any difficulty in altering the constitution we can easily remedy that difficulty by simply making an application to the imperial parliament. To propose to act upon a suggestion of that kind is not the wisest course in the interests of either the majority or the minority in this country. It is not the wisest course surely in the interest of the minority because we do not know at what moment a test of that kind may be applied as against them; it is not the wisest course in the interest of the majority, because it is not in their interest that there should be any dissatisfaction raised by efforts of that kind which may in the end tell against the welfare of the country. I did not find myself able last night to vote for the motion of my hon. friend from Labelle; I do not find myself able to-night to vote for the motion of my hon. friend (Mr. Bergeron), but if it were simply a question of choice I am not sure that I would not prefer either one or the other of these to the amendment suggested by the government. For the reasons which I have already given I am opposed to both, and I shall therefore be obliged to vote against the motion of my hon. friend from Beauharnois as I have already voted against that of my hon. friend from Labelle.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Permit me to say that there is not the slightest doubt entertained by this government as to our right to deal with this matter in the way we are dealing with it. I can safely make the