

that day, composed of men whom we still delight to call the fathers of confederation, put into the constitution principles and regulations for the protection of the minority in its religion, but not in its language. Sir, I have to say this only to my fellow-countrymen. I know very well what will be said to-morrow in the province of Quebec. I anticipate the language which I shall hear in a few days—that I have gone back upon my race. I have heard that before, and I am prepared to hear it again.

I have done the best I could in order to give to the minority in those Territories the rights to which they are entitled under the constitution and my first words to my fellow countrymen in Quebec will be, if they continue in me that confidence which my hon. friend said to-day they had in me, I will tell them that upon this occasion as on all occasions I have stood for their protection in the rights given to them by the constitution. But, Sir, I find nothing in the constitution for the protection of the rights of the French language. It is a right which they must exercise like everybody else and if they become strong they shall be respected and they shall have their language respected but not if they are a minority, as they are to-day, for I understand there are only two members of the French race in the legislature of the Territories out of twenty-five, not a word of French is ever heard in the courts of law because I am happy to say the French do not go to the courts of law and do not require to use their language there. On what principle or what language can it be said that the French people in the Northwest Territories have a right to the privilege of having that language implanted in the constitution, that their language shall be there for ever. My hon. friend from Montmagny (Mr. Armand Lavergne) this afternoon asked a question as to whether parliament had not the right to implant the French language in the new province. Sir, I answer to my hon. friend that I do not recognize that parliament has that right to implant the French language in those new Territories. Parliament may have the power to do so, but I deny that it has the right. Parliament has the power to do everything, but I deprecate the day when the French people of this country shall ask parliament to anything that they have the power to do if they have not at the same time the right to do it. These are the reasons for which I ask that this motion shall not be granted. These are the reasons why I say in the presence of friends and foes, in the hearing of the people in all parts of Canada and especially in the province of Quebec, that if we should grant this motion we would be granting the worst measure that could be granted for the protection even of the very people whom it intends to serve.

Mr. BOURASSA. I need not say that the Prime Minister has made a case upon this

question which goes far beyond in convincing power the one made this afternoon by the Solicitor general. However, one who is anxious of giving on this question a conscientious vote may feel very much embarrassed, when coming to consider the basis of right upon which this legislation is based, to find out that out of our four members of the government, three members of the cabinet and the Solicitor General, there has been complete disagreement between them all as to the basis of right of this legislation. On the 2nd of May the Minister of Inland Revenue made a full and to my mind a convincing argument that one of the strongest reasons why this parliament should secure separate schools to the minority in the Northwest was that those separate schools had been promised to the delegates of Rupert's Land in 1870 by the federal government. He quoted the documents, he gave the evidence and he added these words:

So, Mr. Speaker, there was a formal agreement, a formal compact by which these rights and privileges should continue to be exercised by the Protestants and Catholics of the Northwest. There is no doubt about that. And now that we are called upon to give autonomy to the Northwest Territories, some elements in this country would have the government and parliament not carry out the promise which was made to the minority by the imperial government, by the Canadian government and by Lord Strathcona. Sir, the government of this country will not commit such an injustice; they will not go back on the promise which was made in 1869-70. The government of this country will give the minority their rights which were guaranteed to them by the promise then made, the rights which they enjoy under the constitution.

And those words were applied by the Minister of Inland Revenue to prove that article 7 of the Bill of Rights constituted a solemn pledge upon the conscience of this parliament. If article 7 is covered in that agreement how is it now that we are told there is no such pledge, that there is no such agreement, that that Bill of Rights meant nothing as far as the preservation of the language of the minority is concerned. It is either one or the other, either the Bill of Rights meant something and then the whole Bill of Rights meant something, either clause 7 covering separate schools was guaranteed by this parliament or not. We have been told by the Minister of Inland Revenue, and it has been intimated by the Minister of Justice on the 2nd of May when he quoted one of the despatches of Lord Granville with reference to the same agitation, with reference to the same stipulation and agreement, that the beginning of the engagement taken by this parliament was the pledge given by the government of Canada ratified by the parliament of Canada to those very delegates of Rupert's Land who the right hon. gentleman says now had no right to stipulate with these persons.