

of that paper, Pont Bernard, on the 26th February, referred to the debate raised by this Bill, and to the speech made by the Premier, but he did not say a single word regarding the omission concerning the use of the French language. No person, at that time, had noticed that awful omission, and it was only later on that, for the purpose of having a vote, it was thought of.

As I said, it is a most remarkable fact, that, after the second reading of the Bill, no person had stated that the French Canadians, in the Territories, had an absolute right to the maintenance of the French language. As a matter of fact, I have not heard of any representations having been made to the government on the matter, up to that date.

Mr. BOURASSA. (Translation.) Why?

Mr. DEMERS. (Translation.) On the grounds that were so ably set forth by the hon. the Prime Minister; on this ground, namely, that under the constitution, we have a right to the use of the French language in the Dominion parliament, before the federal courts, and before the courts and in the legislature of the province of Quebec, but nowhere else. That is the right provided for by the constitution of 1867. But, I may be told that there was a law passed in 1877, which provides for the use of the French language. We do not repeal that law.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. (Translation.) Does my hon. friend pretend that when this Bill is passed, the law of 1877 will not be repealed?

Mr. DEMERS. (Translation.) The law of 1877 will be repealed; but by that very fact, the French language will not be abolished. I maintain that under this Bill, we are not doing away with the use of the French language. I hold, moreover, that under the constitution, we have no right to impose that restriction. We have the power to do it. You may have the power to do a thing without being bound to do it?

Mr. MONK. (Translation.) We have the power?

Mr. DEMERS. (Translation.) Does my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier state that we have not the power?

Mr. MONK. (Translation.) Have we that power?

Mr. DEMERS. (Translation.) I have maintained that we have the power. The hon. member for Labelle has stated the same. He could then bring forward this motion, without stultifying himself.

Mr. MONK. (Translation.) The hon. member should not forget that I grounded myself upon the statement made by the Minister of Inland Revenue, who declared that, for us, the Bill of Rights of 1870 was

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sacred. I argued that if we are bound by the Bill of Rights on the school question, we are also bound as concerns the use of the French language.

Mr. DEMERS. (Translation.) My hon. friend is now abjuring the principle which he has laid down.

Mr. MONK. (Translation.) I have been enlightened by the argument made by the hon. Minister of Inland Revenue.

Mr. DEMERS. (Translation.) Precisely, but it is regrettable that the hon. member did not allow himself to be enlightened upon other points by the hon. the Minister of Inland Revenue. The school question is one thing and the use of the French language is another thing.

We should be very solicitous about the autonomy of the provinces. We are bound to give them all the rights conferred upon them by the constitution. That constitution restricts the powers of the provinces, as to the educational question, but not as to the language. That restrictive provision is to be found in article 93, with which we are all familiar. The provision relating to the French language is limited only to the province of Quebec, and to the federal parliament, and it applies nowhere else. Could the government impose this new restriction on the western provinces, the more so as our French speaking fellow-countrymen are so few in numbers there that they would not even speak French in the legislature, were they given that right? The French Canadian population in the west represent but about four per cent of the total population; such being the figures laid before the House without being challenged by anybody. Each legislature will have 25 members, making 50 in all. According to that ratio of 4 per cent, there would only be one French member in each legislature. That there may be an assembly, at least three people are needed, and as that French member would be alone, he would have to speak French to himself.

To my mind it is not a matter of sentiment, but it is one of principle. I do not call in question the good faith of any hon. member. I am quite willing to believe that the mover of this motion is a sincere convert. To my mind, this is a constitutional matter, and I say that we should not impose, without an absolute necessity, any restrictions on the new provinces. This view of mine tallies with the statement I made on the first reading of the Bill. The hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa), is of a different opinion, and I regret very much that I cannot see this matter in the same light as he does. For us, it is a very delicate duty to be obliged to vote against the binding use of the French language, but we have to follow the wise dictates of reason rather than those of sentiment.

The present circumstances recall to my mind an anecdote. A great Greek orator one day declared at a public meeting in