

MR. SPEAKER, I am quite sure the honorable member for Verchères will be delighted to learn that it was perfectly well understood at the Conference of Quebec that the French language should not only be spoken in the courts of justice, in the Federal Parliament and in the Legislature of Lower Canada, but that, precisely as is now the case, the *Votes and Proceedings* of the Legislature, as well as all the Federal laws and those of the Legislature of Lower Canada, should be printed in both languages. And what is still more, under Confederation the French language will be spoken before the Federal tribunals, an advantage which we do not possess at present when we apply to the Court of Appeals of Great Britain. So that the honorable member for Verchères and this honorable House will gladly admit that its representatives at the Conference of Quebec did not fail in their duty on that point. These are the principles upon which the new Constitution will be based, and I feel justified in going so far as to say that it was impossible to secure more effectually this essential privilege of our nationality, and at the same time our civil and religious institutions. I was anxious to offer these explanations to the honorable member for Verchères and to the House, and I trust they will completely satisfy the country.

MR. GEOFFRION—The honorable member for Dorchester (Hon. Sol. Gen. LANGEVIN) has explained to us that the intention of the members of the Conference of Quebec was, not only that the French language should be used in the Federal Legislature and the Local Government of Lower Canada, as well as before the tribunals of the country, but that it was to be a right guaranteed to the French population by the Constitution under Confederation. The honorable gentleman has also told us that the word "marriage" inserted in the resolutions does not signify anything else but what he explained to the House in his speech, and that we ought to be happy to see that the representatives of the French population at the Conference had thus secured the safety of their civil and religious institutions. For my part, MR. SPEAKER, I must say that I cannot bring myself, like the honorable member, to see the splendid protection he vaunts so highly. If the resolutions now before this House have any meaning, that meaning is only to be derived from the strict letter of the resolutions themselves. It will always be optional with the British majority to avail themselves of the letter of the Constitution,

and they may at any time say to us: "You cannot have it, we oppose it, and the Constitution does not confer on you the rights you claim under it." And it will be the more easy for them to do so from the fact that the resolution does not affirm that these matters cannot be disturbed. If the Conference had any other intention than what appears in the resolutions, the House should be made aware of it before being called upon to vote on these resolutions. For if the intention of the Conference was as stated by the Honorable Solicitor General for Lower Canada, and if that intention be carried into effect, the House will run the risk of discovering that on all the other resolutions the intention is different from the letter, and will be in like manner carried out, for the resolutions must be interpreted as they stand, without reference to the intention of the members of the Conference. And for that reason I cannot help declaring that we French-Canadians would be guilty of an act of unpardonable imprudence in adopting a resolution which declares that the Federal Legislature is to have the right of legislating on marriage and divorce, and which merely declares that the French language *may* be used in the Federal Legislature. We French-Canadian members, I repeat it, ought to insist that the word "shall" be substituted for the word "may" in the resolution relating to this matter, with reference to the publication of the proceedings of the Legislature. If this is not done, and if we do not take every possible precaution, sooner or later the English speaking majority in the Federal Legislature will unite against us on this point, and enact that the laws shall be printed in the English language only. And if we rest satisfied with the understanding referred to by the Honorable Solicitor General for Lower Canada, we shall be told when we exclaim against that injustice: "You should have obtained more full and complete guarantees, and you should have seen that the Constitution was made more explicit and more precise on this point." And we shall have no answer to make. We must perforce be resigned, and put up with all the restrictions the majority may impose upon us. I maintain, therefore, that it is the duty of the French-Canadian members of this House to induce the Government to embody the understanding arrived at amongst the members of the Conference in the Constitution, and to require that the guarantees said to be afforded to us by the Constitution shall be more clearly expressed than they are in the resolutions. If we vote