

Let me ask another question of my hon. friend. If there is one thing which ought to be held to be a right of the people of the province, it is that the French language should be used in the debates of the legislature and in the courts of justice. This proposition will not be denied, and in that respect the contention of my hon. friend (Mr. Monk) cannot be maintained unless he can base his claim upon the ground of constitutional right. True, he has attempted to do so, but he has failed in his attempt to show that the French people in the Northwest Territories can claim the right of the use of their language upon any authority in the British North America Act or upon any reasons which are to be found in the history to which allusion has been made. If the French people of the Territories cannot claim this right upon any constitutional ground, upon what ground can they claim it? It is perhaps worthy of remark that although the French language exists to-day as an official language in the Northwest Territories in the courts of law, if I am correctly informed there has not been a single document in the French language entered in a court of justice there for the last fifteen years, nor a single word of French spoken in the courts. That is not to be wondered at when we remember that to-day the population of French origin in the Northwest Territories is almost infinitely small, not more than 4 per cent. If the French people in the Territories were in the same position to-day as they were in 1877; if there were as many who speak the French language as there are who speak the English language, then I could understand my hon. friend arguing from the point of view of utility and sentiment. But, if it be true that according to the last census there were altogether 200,000 people in the Northwest Territories, and only 8,000 of them who spoke the French language, then I say it cannot be argued in the name of justice that they have the right to the official use of that language. For my part, proud as I am of my French origin, I could not claim in the name of justice and fair-play that right, in view of the fact that there is such a small proportion of French-speaking people in those Territories. Indeed, if we look at the statistics, there would be more justice for the French Canadians in the state of Massachusetts to claim the right to use their language in the legislature at Boston, because the number of French Canadians in Massachusetts is greater in proportion to the total population, than is the number of French-speaking people in the Northwest Territories to the total population there. In 1877 it was said that there were as many who spoke the French language as there were who spoke the English language in the Northwest Territories. Thirty years after, in 1890, Mr. Dalton McCarthy proposed to abolish the French language in these Territories. It was felt at that time that it was

not fair to ask for the passage of such a law. Members on both sides of the House agreed—I was one of them, my hon. friend (Mr. Bergeron) was one of them, Sir John Macdonald was one of them, Sir John Thompson was one of them, Mr. Blake was one of them; the entire House of Commons with the exception of a small minority agreed to the proposition that the legislature of the Northwest Territories, which under the law of 1877 had not the power to deal with the French language, should have that power. Now, this is the resolution of my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier:

Either the English or the French language may be used by any person in the debates of the legislative assembly of the province and in the proceedings of the courts, and both these languages shall be used in the records and journals of such assembly, and all laws made by the legislature shall be printed in both languages; provided, however, that the said legislative assembly may by law or otherwise regulate its proceedings and the manner of recording and publishing the same, and the regulations so made shall be embodied in a proclamation which shall be forthwith made and published by the Lieutenant Governor, in conformity of the law, and thereafter shall have full force and effect.

That is the motion of my hon. friend (Mr. Monk) and it is word for word the resolution passed by this parliament in 1890 for which I voted in common with my hon. friend from Beauharnois. It did not happen very often in those days; it does not happen very often now, that my hon. friend from Beauharnois and I vote together, so that it must have been a good cause which united us on that occasion.

Mr. BERGERON. I hope it will be the same thing to-night.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I hope also it will be the same thing.

Mr. BERGERON. I will vote for the amendment of my hon. friend (Mr. Monk).

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. And if my hon. friend is fair as he was in 1890 he will vote with me on this occasion as he voted with me then.

Mr. BERGERON. It is the same motion.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. It is the same motion and the circumstances are similar, and when I explain the matter my hon. friend will be welcome afterwards to say how he will vote. What did I vote for on that occasion, and what did my hon. friend vote for? He voted that the legislature should have the power to deal with the French language in the debates of the legislature, either to adopt or to abolish it. Is my hon. friend to-day less disposed to give that power to the new provinces than he was to give it to the legislature of the Territories in 1890? In 1890 my hon. friend and I agreed to give to the Territories the