

sible, to the amendment of which my hon. friend the Minister of Justice (Mr. Fitzpatrick) gave notice on the 26th June inst. It was an amendment intended to replace clause 24, and it reads as follows:

The Northwest Territories Act, being chapter 50 of the Revised Statutes, and all Acts amended thereof are hereby repealed as respect to said clauses, provided that notwithstanding such repeal so much of the said Acts and of any order or regulation made thereunder as was in force immediately before the coming into force of this Act, and is not inconsistent with anything contained in this Act or as to which this Act contains no provision intended as a substitute therefor shall continue in force in the said clause in pursuance of and for the purpose of section 15 of this Act.

As hon. members no doubt remember, section 15 provides for the maintenance of the Northwest Territories Act until the provisions thereof, which are not repealed under the section which I have just read, are either abrogated, amended or changed by competent authority; that is, by the imperial parliament, or by the Dominion legislature or by the provincial legislature itself. At the time when the amendment which I have just mentioned of my hon. friend the Minister of Justice was submitted to the House I asked the hon. minister if it was not the case that the provision of law which had existed in the Northwest Territories ever since their complete organization regarding the local use of the French language was not continued by this very Act, and if it was not the case that it was so continued. I pointed out that it might fairly be claimed by the local legislature that it was a provincial matter and that consequently the legislatures of these two provinces might claim the right to abrogate that old disposition of law and abolish completely the use of the French language. My hon. friend the Minister of Justice was of the opinion, and no doubt correctly, that the clause in the law was continued, the clause which dates from the year 1877, but he also added that in his opinion it was a local matter and that the provincial legislature might validly abrogate that disposition of law. He further declared that in his opinion it was a matter that should be left entirely to the discretion of the legislature. I do not wish to go too fully into the history of this legislation, which it is my desire to see continued for many reasons, but there is so much ignorance abroad as to the circumstances under which the French language was adopted in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories that it is absolutely necessary to refer at least to some of the important and governing facts. I may say that I have received from my electors and others many communications in regard to this amendment, and amongst other communications there was one from a very intelligent man who should have some knowledge of the history of this country and who asked

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me to point out to him in what clause of the treaty of Paris there was any stipulation providing for the maintenance or existence of the French language in the Northwest Territories. This betrays, as hon. members who have some knowledge of history, will no doubt admit, a very great ignorance of the circumstances, though comparatively recent in the history of this country. I will, therefore, briefly state to the House what was the origin of this legislation, in what sense it is to be considered as an agreement of a most binding nature, and why, in my opinion, it is incumbent upon us at the present moment to wish for the maintenance of this constitutional provision in the Act which we are about to pass. As hon. members are no doubt aware, after the formation of the Canadian confederation and the passage of the British North America Act two members of the new Dominion cabinet, Sir George Cartier and the Hon. William Macdougall were deputed to England to interview the imperial authorities, and in pursuance of the scheme of confederation, to have incorporated in the new confederation that vast territory in the west known as Rupert's Land. These negotiations were successful and culminated in the passage by the imperial parliament in 1868 of the Rupert's Land Act which gave power to the imperial government to treat with us as to the cession and abandonment to the Dominion government of that large territory which we coveted the moment we became a confederation. Sir George Cartier and his colleague returned to Canada after the Order in Council had been passed under which all the rights of the Hudson Bay Company in that territory having been settled, it became incorporated into the Dominion of Canada. Upon their return to Canada proceedings were taken by the Dominion government to take possession of this newly acquired territory. As hon. members are aware—it is a story that has been often told in this House—the inhabitants, then settled principally on the Red river, offered a strenuous resistance to the taking possession of that territory by the Dominion government. They organized as a provincial government and prepared to resist violently the arrival of the new governor of these territories, the envoy of the Dominion government. We, on our side sent out an armed expedition with the knowledge and co-operation and assistance of the imperial authorities. At this juncture, and in order to avoid bloodshed the imperial authorities intervened and instructions were given to Sir John Young then Governor General of Canada, by Lord Granville, Colonial Secretary, to solicit 'pourparlers' with the residents of the Territories, and to make with them the best terms possible, giving them every guarantee that the rights which they had enjoyed under the semi-paternal government of the Hudson Bay Company would be preserved to them, and telling them that by submitting