

in 1891, and in 1901 they were four per cent of the population.

Mr. SPROULE. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Bourassa) seems to imagine that all the knowledge in the world is in his cranium. If he had listened to me he would have heard that I said that the French were not increasing in proportion to the increase of other nationalities.

Mr. BOURASSA. That is exactly the point which is contradicted by the figures which were given by the Solicitor General.

Mr. SPROULE. In 1891 the French were 2.31 per cent of the population, and in 1901 they were 4 per cent.

Mr. BOURASSA. Exactly.

Mr. SPROULE. But listen to this. In 1891 there were no Germans in the country and in 1901 there were 19,572 or 12 per cent of the population. Does that not show that my statement is correct. I said that the French were not increasing proportionately as other nationalities are.

Mr. BOURASSA. As some others.

Mr. SPROULE. Well, take the Scandinavians. In 1891 there were none in the Territories and in 1901 there were over 5,000 Scandinavians or 3.39 per cent of the population. In 1891 there were no Russians in the Territories, but there are 17,051 there to-day. Therefore the French have not increased as rapidly in proportion as any of these nationalities I have mentioned. If the French were increasing very rapidly and if they were going to be numerically very much stronger than the other nationalities, there might be some justification for arguing that you should make the French language official or semi-official. But when we remember that they are only 4.43 per cent of the population to-day there seems to be no reason for such suggestion.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. It would appear that other nationalities are increasing more rapidly than the English, and that therefore according to your argument the English language should not be official.

Mr. SPROULE. Not at all; there is not one-fourth the number in an English-speaking country to-day. But I ask, what is the history of every country in the world? Is it not a history of change? And must not governments keep up with the changed conditions? What is the history of constitutions? Is it not a history of evolution? What is the British constitution? Not a written constitution. It is a constitution which is changing every year of its life; it is a constitution that grows by accretion and evolution. And it is so in that country as much as in any other. While there may have been a justification at one time in the history of the Northwest for making the French language official, there is no jus-

Mr. BOURASSA.

tification for it to-day, because the French element is not sufficiently numerous to warrant it.

Mr. MONK. Would my hon. friend allow me to ask him a question? If there was a pledge or agreement made, does my hon. friend think that number or proportion can affect that?

Mr. SPROULE. What are we doing in every session of our parliament? Are we not breaking pledges that were made in the past? Are we not making laws to repeal others under which vested rights were acquired? Are we not taking away the liberties of the people in various directions? Yes, we are doing it. That is the history of every parliament in the world. I have not the sacred and religious respect which some people have for pledges given forty or fifty or a hundred years ago, given under conditions that do not exist to-day, and there is not the same necessity now for carrying out those pledges that there was at that time. We must be up-to-date. There is not a religion under the sun that is not changing; there is not a constitution that is not changing; there is not a parliament that is not changing. So it is with countries, and so it is with provinces and localities. The language that was spoken in England centuries ago is not spoken to-day. There is no need of it, because other people are occupying the ground. When the Romans occupied England, the Roman language was spoken there, but it is not found there to-day, because the conditions have changed. Other languages have come in and taken its place. So it must be in the Northwest Territories as in every other part of the world; as the conditions change the language must change. We must deal with this matter in the light of existing conditions, and the existing conditions do not in my judgment justify either making the French language official in the legislative assembly or authorizing its use in the courts. The hon. member read what Sir John Thompson said to the effect that it would be a strange thing if we convicted a man belonging to the French race in a court where the evidence against him was given in a language which he did not understand. The same thing was done in the case of an Italian who was tried at North Bay the other day; it was all done through an interpreter. Is not the same thing done every day both in Canada and the United States? Although foreigners come here who do not understand our language—

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. Does my hon. friend pretend that the French Canadian is a foreigner in Canada?

Mr. SPROULE. I am not saying anything about them being foreigners. I am talking about criminals being convicted in a court where they do not know a word of the language that is spoken; and when the hon. gentleman quoted the language of Sir