

tra vires, from going into force. I do not see that is an argument against my present contention. But in 1890, as many members of this committee are aware, a very great agitation began having for its object the abolition of the French language in the Northwest Territories, and indeed it is sufficient to refer to some of the speeches which were made in the House at that time to see that the object of these agitators was to achieve the complete suppression of the French language throughout the whole of Canada.

They considered—to my mind very erroneously—that unity of language was absolutely necessary for the formation here of a united people, and that there was no constitutional guarantee of any kind providing for the maintenance of the French language, either in the province of Quebec or anywhere else. It is rather astonishing, on referring to that debate, which lasted many days in this House, to find that Mr. McCarthy, who was a man of very considerable attainments, seemed to consider,—when introducing his resolution to expunge from the Northwest Territories Act, the provisions to which I am now referring—that it must have been by some mistake or oversight that this provision had been inserted in the Manitoba Act and the Northwest Territories Act. He saw no reason why there should have been such a provision. That conclusion to which he arrived seems astonishing when one is aware of the facts, a summary of which I have just given the House, and when one knows the arrangements which were made in 1870 before the Dominion government took possession of Rupert's Land. On Mr. McCarthy's resolution, the discussion took a very wide range indeed. To that discussion I propose briefly to refer in order to show why I have arrived at the conclusion that the amendment I am submitting ought to be most acceptable to this committee and House. Mr. McCarthy's Bill provided for the expunging from the Northwest Territories Act of 1877 the constitutional provision guaranteeing the preservation of the French language in the Territories. The late Mr. Davin, who was then a member of this House proposed an amendment on the second reading of Mr. McCarthy's Bill, the gist of which was that the decision as to whether that provision of the statute should be maintained should be left to the Northwest assembly. To that amendment a sub-amendment was proposed by the late Mr. Beausoleil, who then represented the electoral division of Berthier. Mr. Beausoleil took a very different view, by his sub-amendment he proposed that the provision in the statute should be maintained intact. His argument was, as is mine now, that that provision had been inserted in the Northwest Territories Act, as well as the Manitoba Act, in conformity with a solemn agreement made in 1870—an agreement

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which could not be departed from without the evident consent of all those interested; and that it would be an absolute breach of faith with the people of the Northwest to interfere in any way with that agreement, much less remove it from the federal statute. The House divided on Mr. Beausoleil's sub-amendment, and it was negatived, but my right hon. friend the leader of the government voted in favour of it. Speaking on it, he said:

The amendment affirms the proposition that the present state of things ought to be permanent. With this, however, I cannot agree, and although I am prepared to vote for the amendment of my hon. friend from Berthier, I cannot do so without taking exception to his statements. It is impossible to admit, for instance, that the institutions of the Northwest are permanent. On the contrary they are exceptionally temporary; they deal with a state of things which is exceptional in itself, they were devised at a time when there was no population, and they must be modified from time to time as the necessities of the case require. But at this moment to say they are permanent is a thing in which I cannot agree, except so far as they must be permanent in every particular, so long as we are not ready to give these people a more extended form of local authority. My hon. friend also says in this amendment, that since we passed this law and gave this incipient constitution to the Northwest Territories, nothing has occurred to change our views. I cannot agree with that. Everything has occurred since that time, not to change our views, but to set us thinking about what we should do at a future time, not very far off, in regard to these Territories. What has occurred is this: a population has gone into those Territories; they have been given a legislature, and that legislature has demanded certain measures—not only on the question of language, but on that of schools and on the system of government. Bearing these facts in mind it seems to me that the proper time to deal with this question will be when we are prepared to give the Territories perhaps not absolute, but a more extended form of local self-government; and when that time comes, we must be prepared to deal with this question upon the broad principle of this constitution, which has been devised for the safety of the majority and the protection of the minority, and in the light of the condition of things which may exist at that time in the Territories.

I quote my right hon. friend, in the first place, as a justification for my bringing up the question at present, because, according to what he then said, this is the proper time to deal with that question. That is one point, but there is another which I invoke in favour of the contention I have the honour to submit, and that is what my hon. friend said, namely, that when the time came to deal with this question, we must deal with it in the broad spirit of the constitution, safeguarding the majority and at the same time protecting the minority.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. On what page is that?

Mr. MONK. Page 744 of the 'Hansard' of 1890. I will refer to what Sir John A.