

French language. He contends that it adds nothing and even may lessen this guarantee. Again, I do not claim to be a lawyer, however, I have devoted much time to the study of constitutional law. I once heard Sir Charles Tupper, with the energy which characterized him and his powerful voice, state that if, to become a lawyer, one must learn how to split hairs in four and lose one's common sense; he preferred not to be a lawyer.

I thought I heard the hon. member, while quietly smoking my pipe behind the curtains so as to seek some inspiration—because it is usually while smoking a pipe that I find such inspiration—I thought I heard the hon. member quote one of my speeches, I do not exactly remember the year, in which I quoted Article 133 of the Constitution as a basis for our rights. I have not the quotation here. May I immediately confess: I have said a lot of nonsense in my life; that may be one, however, from where I stood, I think I caught the sense of this quotation ten years old or more. I then spoke, often, of the "right" of the French Canadians to their language in all spheres of our national administration; but then, as to-day, I was aware of the chasm existing between right and law.

According to the spirit, article 133 recognizes, in principle, equal rights for the two languages; however, in practice, in the words of the act, it restricts the compulsory use of French—compulsory, remember—to the printing of documents of the house and the printing of the statutes; that is all, then a period. Even as regards to the debates of Hansard, instituted four or five years after confederation, I have strong doubts, if from a strictly legal angle, this privilege of taking down stenographic notes, each in turn, of the French and English speeches, and after having both texts translated, I have strong doubts, I state, that such a privilege is covered by article 133. Let us suppose that it is a moral right. Since when in history, have you seen a moral right recognized when it is not backed by the wording of the act? What I find in this case—that is why I approve of this bill—is that, for the first time, in legislation introduced by the government, bearing the seal of government responsibility, and adopted by the house, the French language, both in fact and right, in law as well as in the spirit of the constitution, shall in the future be on an equal footing in the administration of all departments, and that it will no more be left to the whims of a minister or deputy minister,

however narrow-minded or dull he may be, to restrict this right by a narrow and pharisaical interpretation, because he will then have before him the wording of the act.

The hon. member for Ottawa states this act may be abolished next year. No doubt. Such may be the case with all laws. We can do so to-morrow, if we are silly enough—if the session lasts long, anything may happen—we can enact a measure, to-morrow, to abrogate the criminal code and give "carte blanche" to all our criminals; we can enact a measure to do away with hon. gentlemen, the minister, and proclaim that the country will govern its ownself—perhaps, it might not be worse off. It is hard to tell, we can abrogate any statute. Since the Westminster statute has come into force, we can, if we wish, amend any article of our constitution, including article 133. But that we should add to the incomplete and embryonic article 133, an act adopted by this house so as to give effect, in practice, to the principle embodied in that article, I contend that we raise the wall which protects our rights in all the administrative spheres of Canada. I maintain that we give a legal form, a term no more restricted to the Imperial parliament—because we must remember that, in its original form, the British North America Act is an imperial one, if we wish to look at it from a strict legal interpretation—however, by a measure enacted by ourselves, we give our sanction, we spread it, we make its enforcement practical in all departments. And I stated that, in my opinion, the measure introduced by the Secretary of State is an excellent one and is well deserving that we should overlook certain questions of detail.

In the study of acts as in all other measures, let us beware of this tendency of the French character to peer into, as I stated just now, details with a magnifying glass and lose sight of the fundamental principle and the general economy of legislative measures.

It is with both hands that I welcome this bill, as a crowning event of forty years of conflict carried on in defence of the French language, when three quarters of the French Canadian Liberals fired in my back and called me a traitor to Laurier, a struggle which I carried on in agreement with the Liberals and Conservatives of goodwill—there were always some not only among the Canadians speaking French, but also among the Canadians speaking English, in the other provinces. When a rational question is placed before them, supported by arguments not drawn by pinches