

preserved and safeguarded without any legislative enactment. I had no reason to believe nor do I believe that the people of the new provinces would be less generous, less fair or less honourable than the people of my own province; but if strict adherence to the constitution adopted in 1867 would give to the minority greater safeguards, as was argued by the Government supporters to whom I have alluded, it was not the less our duty as loyal Canadians to follow that course, based as it would be upon the fundamental articles of our constitution framed by the wise fathers of Confederation.

I need not emphasize to you, my fellow citizens of the Province of Quebec, the importance of strictly adhering to the terms of the constitution. Your rights in the Province of Quebec—the rights which you so zealously cherish and so stoutly maintain—are dependent upon that constitution. The west is growing rapidly in population and in importance. In the future you will be constrained to rely even more strongly than in the past upon the safeguards which that constitution affords. Those who think to gain by departing from its terms to-day may lose tenfold by a further departure to-morrow. Was it wise, was it prudent for the Government to attempt to amend or alter those provisions of the Federation Act which in my opinion were designed not only for the four original provinces but for those which might subsequently become members of the Confederation—I refer to the provisions distributing legislative power between the Dominion and the several provinces.

Upon what was the attempt based? In the first place upon the assertion that the Act of 1875 contained a compact between Canada and the people of the then territories by which the provisions and restrictions imposed by that Act should continue for all time to come, and even after the establishment of new provinces in these very territories. If that were so, then, as the Minister of Justice of that day admitted, there was good ground for argument that the rights would continue under the terms of my amendment. But if the Act of 1875 constituted a compact with respect to education, why did not the Act of 1877 constitute an equally valid compact with respect to the use of the French language? Yet when Mr. Monk and Mr. Bergeron pressed this argument upon the Prime Minister their motion was rejected, their plea was disregarded, and the alleged compact was absolutely ignored.