

casions when I think the House will say that it is almost impossible to comply with that rule without allowing the Senate to be left under a misapprehension which might create a wrong feeling as to certain rights which have been claimed here. I recognize that the position of a certain portion of the French members of this House is rather an abnormal one. I am quite aware that to the majority of this House it is very unpleasant every year to hear the same question brought up by the same parties in about the same terms, and with, I must say, unfortunately, about the same results. If we were here for our own pleasure, I for one, would take great care never to refer to this subject, but there are some rights which must be defended, and our position here is such that if we do not vindicate those rights I do not see how they can be vindicated anywhere. It is the duty of some representatives from Quebec to lay this question before the House in a way I think it ought to be put. In my opinion—and I think it is even the opinion expressed by the hon. leader of the Government in this House—if the letter of the Constitution is strictly complied with, the spirit is violated, as can easily be shown. It is well known that when the principle of representation by population was admitted, a principle which had been resisted from year to year, not only by representatives of our Province, but by leading men of both Upper and Lower Canada, for more than 25 years, every one will recollect that, while it was adopted for the representation in the House of Commons, the two Provinces were given equal representation as a counterpoise in this House. So that the spirit of the Constitution—and I call special attention to this point—was that not only equal representation but equal strength should be given to both Provinces in this House. If that is not the sense, and not only the sense but the spirit of the Constitution, if there is not a question of equity and justice towards the smaller Provinces involved, I should like to be corrected immediately. But I do not think there is a single member in this House who will pretend that it was not a solemn contract between the different Provinces of this Dominion.

Now, what is the position of parties? While it was understood and solemnly

agreed that the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario should be equal in representation and strength in this House how is it that the Province of Ontario, whose population is much larger than that of Quebec, and very much larger than the group of the Maritime Provinces together, has only 24 members in this House? Is it not evident that the fathers of Confederation, by adopting that rule of giving equal representation to both Provinces in this House, intended that they should possess equal strength and power here as a guarantee that if injustice should be done us by the majority in the other House, that injustice could be remedied in the Senate, where we have equal representation? Hon. gentlemen, most of you have had large experience in constitutional matters, and I ask is there one of you who will contend that the Province which has three Ministers sitting on the Treasury Benches of this House has not a stronger representation than a Province without ministerial representation, without administrative representation, and consequently without administrative influence? Where is the counterpoise that the fathers of Confederation intended to establish here? It does not exist, and it seems to me to be as clear as daylight that the spirit of the Constitution is violated. That is my way, judging of the facts, and I should like to hear some argument to show that I am mistaken. I know that what I am saying is unpleasant to the majority in this House, but the history of the world shows us that majorities do not like to be reminded of their duties, or to hear the rights of minorities asserted. I repeat if this were a personal question I should never open my mouth to vindicate these rights, but this is a part of an inheritance which does not belong to us personally. The rights of our nationality do not belong to us alone. There is only one thing which does belong to us, namely, the duty of defending them whether it be agreeable or disagreeable to us individually. We are not perfectly free and independent as to the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of that duty.

This state of things has existed since 1873, except during the time when the Reform party was in power. At that time an hon. gentleman who occupies a seat in this House was considered the only member of that party who could conveniently