

body that is so well disposed towards us as the Senate is, to show the importance of the French language. At the same time, I may say that we ask simple justice and we claim a right which should not have been contested in any way. We have the right of the first occupants. The French language was the first civilized language spoken in that north-western country, and it was through the French race that the light of civilization first penetrated that vast country. Now, that is a claim which alone was sufficient to warrant our contention, but it has also been admitted at different times. French was adopted as one of the official languages of that country, yet without any reason whatsoever, without any demand from anyone for a change, a law has been passed by the Legislature of Manitoba which declares that French shall no longer be recognized as an official language in the province. Under the circumstances, we think we are justified in calling upon the Federal Government to come to our protection. I think that a remedy will be found and a stop will be put to the trouble which is checking the progress and preventing the development of our country. No doubt eventually the French language will fall into disuse in that country, but the French people generally are not disposed to submit to be forced into a position that they dislike. We look forward to a day when the use of the French language will disappear, but we prefer that that should be the work of time and not the work of men who are now living. Perhaps before ten years it would not be considered necessary to translate all the public documents into French, but let us await that time, and let us respect the rights that all possess under the law. My object in calling for the papers is to have them before the House when the question comes up for discussion, so that we may all be informed as to the position in which the matter stands. I know as soon as this House is acquainted with our position that the majority will do all in their power to help us, as they have done on other occasions, and thus will aid in promoting the progress and prosperity of Manitoba and the North-West. There are people of French origin, not only in Manitoba, but throughout the North-West, who are waiting for justice, and they do not understand why they should have to wait so long for that to which they are fairly entitled.

HON. MR. MACDONALD (B.C.)—In what position does the Bill that was passed by the Manitoba Legislature now stand? Has it become law?

HON. MR. GIRARD—The matter is now before the Government, and we are waiting for more information.

HON. MR. MACDONALD (B.C.)—Then it has not become law yet?

HON. MR. GIRARD—Yes; but its constitutionality is contested in the courts.

HON. MR. ABBOTT—It is very important that these papers should come down, and I hope that the hon. gentleman's motion will pass.

HON. MR. SCOTT—I assume that the Local Legislature has no power to pass such an Act. I have not followed up the controversy recently, but it is quite impossible, unless power is conferred on the Local Legislature, to repeal any clause of the Act under which Manitoba came into existence as a province of the Dominion. One clause provides that both languages shall be used officially. It is as follows.—

“Either the English or the French language may be used by any person in the debates of the Houses of the Legislature, and both those languages shall be used in the respective records and journals of those Houses; and either of those languages may be used by any person, or in any pleading or process, in or issuing from any court of Canada established under the British North America Act, 1867, or in or from all or any of the courts of the province. The Acts of the Legislature shall be printed and published in both languages.”

HON. MR. ABBOTT—My hon. friend will see that this is only a motion for the papers. When the papers come down we can have a full discussion on the question.

HON. MR. SCOTT—It is well that we should know how the question stands. I assume that the clause which I have quoted could be repealed in one of two ways, either by petition to the Imperial Parliament or, possibly—I submit myself to correction—by an Act of the Parliament of Canada; and as no such Act has been passed, any legislation repealing this particular section would be null and void, and simply waste paper.

The motion was agreed to.