

THE SENATE.

Ottawa, Wednesday, May 27th, 1891.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 o'clock.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN MANITOBA.

MOTION.

HON. MR. GIRARD moved :

That an humble Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General ; praying that His Excellency will cause to be laid before this House, copies of all documents submitted to the Privy Council on which action has been taken with respect to the Act passed by the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba, abolishing the official use of the French language in that Province.

He said : After the numerous petitions which have been submitted for the consideration of the House, I am afraid that I will tax your patience if I call your attention to a petition of a different nature. You have been asked by petitioners in all parts of the Dominion to protect the majority from the evils of the liquor traffic: I am asking you now to protect the minority in one of the provinces and in the territories from an encroachment upon their rights and privileges. It seems to me that it is the duty of every member of this House, if he finds a lack of harmony in the province from which he comes, to investigate the cause and to suggest a remedy. I come from a distant part of the Dominion, but certainly a most progressive part. We have gained in population, importance and influence, I think, more than any other portion of the Dominion, and our increasing value to the Confederation is being recognized by the Central Government from time to time. It is admitted now that we are one of the great bases on which the whole future of Canada rests. Every one is, therefore, interested in relieving us from causes of trouble, so far as it can be done by wise legislation. Without attributing motives, I must say that the present Government of Manitoba has dealt harshly with the French minority of the province. I do not like to invoke the privilege of nationality; I prefer to call myself a British subject and a Canadian, and to claim the same protection as other inha-

bitants of the country. After a while, I hope there will be no necessity to seek to maintain special privileges for any portion of the community, but for the present we need exceptions. Up to the present time, we have had no reason to complain of illiberal treatment, so far as our religion is concerned, but we have a grievance in the way our language has been dealt with. I do not see what necessity there was to prohibit the use of the French language in official documents. It is a great injustice to the French population of Manitoba. The privilege was granted to the Province under the constitution. It was recognized in the British North America Act of 1867 and again in the constitution of Manitoba. At a time when there was no necessity for change, the Local Legislature declares that French shall no longer be an official language in the Province. If England has become so great that she is recognized as, *par excellence*, the first nation in the world, it is certainly due to the different nationalities which compose that great empire, and amongst the various nationalities none occupies a higher rank or deserves more consideration than ours, because certainly we have always been ready to furnish proof of our loyalty and to defend British interests and in every way to show that we are worthy of being British subjects. Now, what will be the effect of this trouble to which the legislation of the Manitoba Legislature has given rise? It will certainly arrest the development of the Province. Strangers will not come to settle in a country where such troubles prevail, where they may be exposed to the dangers of internal strife at any moment. People in various parts of the world, and especially in Europe, are preparing to come and live with us, bringing not only their wealth, but, what is more important, large families to share in the future prosperity and greatness of our North-West. We have told them on many occasions that there is room in our western territories for millions of people. That is all very true, but at the same time strangers who have not seen the country are naturally afraid to settle there so long as there is any danger that the peace and good government of the country will be interfered with. They will probably prefer to settle where there is more security for the maintenance of peace. It is not necessary for me to enter into an argument, before a