

# House of Commons Debates

## FOURTH SESSION—TENTH PARLIAMENT

### HOUSE OF COMMONS.

TUESDAY, January 28, 1908.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

#### THE FRENCH LANGUAGE—ITS USE IN CONNECTION WITH PUBLIC UTILITIES.

Mr. ARMAND LAVERGNE (Montmagny.) (Translation.) Moved for leave to introduce Bill (No. 85) to amend the Railway Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the object of the Bill I now introduce is to remedy a state of things that prevails especially in the province of Quebec. The principle of this amendment is now embodied in the Railway Act as regards railway crossings, delays of trains, &c. In short, I would like that in the province of Quebec the railway companies, the telegraph and telephone companies, together with every public utility company, should be compelled to use equally the French and English languages in their relations with the public. There are, of course, in the Railway Act two clauses compelling these companies, under a penalty of \$5, to publish certain indications in both languages. What I am asking is that this principle be extended so as to meet the requirements of the public. For instance, when to-day a man in the province of Quebec who speaks French only ships goods by a freight train he has to sign a contract. The blank or form handed to him is printed in English only. This remark applies to telegraph, telephone and other companies. Their contract is printed in English only, and that contract which binds the individual is exceedingly harsh. Most of the time, if not in every instance, the man who signs it does not understand the very first word of it.

My amendment is altogether in the spirit of our constitution in the widest meaning of the word. For if there are Canadians who speak nothing but the English language, there are others, especially in the province of Quebec, whose only language is the French. So, hereafter in the province of Quebec every railway, telegraph or telephone company, or any other company being a public utility shall use jointly the Eng-

lish and French languages in all the public operations of their service, either for the publication of the arrival or departure of trains, for time-tables, transfer tickets, way-bills, baggage checks, employees' badges, car class indication, message or contract blanks, subscription books, or public notices or regulations in stations, cars, offices or workshops of such companies or public utilities.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the first time.

#### QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE—'LA PRESSE' AND MR. NORTHRUP'S MOTION.

Mr. ARMAND LAVERGNE (Montmagny.) (Translation.) Mr. Speaker, before the orders of the day are called, I wish to rise to a question of privilege. I read in 'La Presse' edition of the 25th inst., that when the question was put on Mr. Northrup's motion relating to the production of certain documents, Messrs. Robitaille and Armand Lavergne were absent, but that Mr. Lavergne was not far away from the House of Commons when the vote was taken. This tends to make it understood that I ran away in order not to vote. Indeed, I was not far from Ottawa, but I was on board of the train going to Quebec.

For the better information of the 150,000 readers of 'La Presse,' I may say that had I been in the House at that time I would have voted for Mr. Northrup's amendment, because I consider it the very essence of our representative government and of Canadian liberalism that members of parliament be allowed to examine all documents before being called upon to grant subsidies to His Majesty.

#### MAIL COMMUNICATION WITH THE YUKON.

Mr. A. THOMPSON (Yukon Territory.) Before the orders of the day are called, I wish to draw the attention of the Postmaster General to complaints I have had from the Yukon regarding the transmission of mail, and to ask him what mails are allowed at this time to go to the Yukon.

Hon. RODOLPHE LEMIEUX (Postmaster General). From the 1st of June until