

Montreal make an effort of altruistic imagination. Suppose all the public services, not in Quebec, but in Ontario, or New-Brunswick, or Manitoba, communicated with the public of those provinces in the French language *only*. How long would the English majority in those provinces stand it?

Now, when that movement was started in Quebec, how was it received by the English-speaking public at large, and by the companies interested?

Apart from the venerable Lord Bishop of Quebec, and a mere handful of enlightened English people, who heartily approved of it, it was treated by the English press, and by the mass of the English-speaking public of Quebec, either with indifference, derision or hostility.

The initiators of the movement, and those of us who supported them, in the legislature, in the press or on the platform, were styled as "racial agitators" and "demagogues".

One hundred and ten years after the first Assembly in Quebec had given equality of rights to all protestant communities, it took two years of effort and agitation to enable Mr Lavergne to bring through that same Assembly, a piece of legislation binding the companies doing public service in Quebec to put the language of the majority on the same footing as that of the minority.

This was carried only in the teeth of the companies, who fought the bill before both houses of parliament. Their joint counsel was precisely Mr R. C. Smith, K.C., who had, the other day, the good sense to refuse the candidature for the mayoralty of Montreal. Mr Smith is undoubtedly an able lawyer and an amiable gentleman. But he must be very little versed in the ethics of a mixed community like this, to have accepted to put before the Legislature a plea which amounted to this: the corporations serving the public of this province, and making their money largely with the people of this province, should not be forced to submit to the rules of common sense, not to speak of courtesy, and deal with the majority of their clients in their own language — and, let it not be forgotten, one of the official languages not only in the province but in the whole Dominion!

Especially, the "big men" at the head of those corporations must have lacked the slightest touch of the "instinct of social justice", when they directed their counsel to put up such a plea. And the English-speaking journalists and leaders of opinion in this province must have had a very rudimentary apportionment of the same instinct, not to have cried "shame" on those "big business men".

After the bill was made law, the companies considered seriously whether they would test its constitutionality in the courts. They finally decided to let matters go; and they started to conform themselves to the law with the least *empressement* possible.

As recently as in december last, I waited half an hour at the office of the Dominion Express Co., on St. James street, to get a receipt in French for a parcel sent to Saint-Jérôme. After the clerks had ransacked the whole office, they had to admit they had none at hand. One official told me they had used so many of them, that the supply had run short. Another informed me that they used those French forms so rarely that he did not know where they could be found! The re-