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MR. BARRON'S SPEECH

On Dual Language in N. W. T.

From the Hansard.

Continued from last week.

Sir, I was prepared to take the objection that that amendment did not go far enough, that it did not include the ordinances, it did not include the statutes, it did not include the proceedings in the courts; but this objection, on my part, was anticipated by the First Minister when he spoke to-night, and explained that it was no matter, that the reason they were not included in this amendment was that the ordinances were published by this Parliament, or were under the control of this Parliament, and, therefore, this amendment went far enough. I confess that that answer of the First Minister is a complete answer to the objection I would have raised to this amendment not including the ordinances and the statutes. But the Bill of the hon. member for Simcoe may be passed, and still the ordinances and statutes will be published in both languages. Why? Because, what the Bill of the member for North Simcoe proposes is simply to repeal the 110th section of the North-West Territories Act, which has nothing whatever to do with the publication of the ordinances and the statutes which, as the First Minister stated this afternoon, were under the control of this Parliament, and therefore would be published in both languages. Now, if the Bill of the member from North Simcoe were to become law the statutes and the ordinances relating to the North-West Territories would still be published in both languages for the reason I have stated. Now, I stated in the opening of my remarks that I would be compelled to refer briefly to the remarks of the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake), and in doing so let me state that no one has any idea of the reluctance with which I do so, because I have such an unbounded respect and high admiration for that hon. gentleman, and I am always ready and willing, so far as I can, to bend my will to the will of the hon. member for West Durham, so long as my conscience and my better judgment allow me to do so. But upon this occasion I am unable to do so, and I want to refer to one or two matters upon which he has spoken, and upon which, to my mind, he appeared to me to take up a wrong position. He said that the North-West Council had no right to speak upon this important matter, and he used this language:—

"The North-West Assembly had no permission or authority from this Parliament, its creators, to deal with this question at all, and the electors to that Assembly had not before them, when the Assembly was elected, any proposition upon that subject. So, neither was there an authority in the body, nor was there the provision in the constitution."

Now, Mr. Speaker, there can be no possible doubt of the truth of that proposition, nobody ever denied it; but at the same time to say that the North-West Territories had no right to speak out upon this matter, is setting forth a proposition which cannot possibly be accepted. Why, Sir, if it is correct that the North-West Council had no right to speak out upon this matter, is setting forth a proposition which cannot possibly be accepted, then how much more are we stultifying ourselves in this House in the action we have taken, when, during my short period in Parliament, we have already spoken out upon matters relating to the entire Empire, more especially the subject of Home Rule. Sir, if the Hon. Member is right in his contention we never had the right to do that; still we did it, and if we did that, with still greater reason may the representatives of the North-West Assembly speak out upon that question which peculiarly affects themselves. But in addition to the fact that the North-West Council have, by the resolution forwarded to the member for North Simcoe and placed upon the Table of this House, spoken out in very strong and plain language upon this subject, we have also other means of information whereby we know that it is the almost unanimous wish of the people of the North-West Territories to abolish the dual language. The hon. member from North Simcoe read, I believe, some telegrams the other night which were questioned by the hurried interruption of the Secretary of State. He read one, I believe, signed by a gentleman named McCaul. I happen to have the pleasure of knowing that gentleman, and I am quite confident, from my knowledge of him, he being a son of the late Dr. McCaul, President of the University of Toronto, that he is utterly incapable of sending such a telegram as was read by the member from North Simcoe, unless the statements contained in it were accurate in every particular. Let me read from the Calgary Herald, February 7, in regard to the dual language in the North-West:

"Here is a system which none of us ever asked for, which was imposed upon the North-West without its pre-knowledge or consent; a system which we have no need of, which we most decidedly object to as useless and costly; and the opportunity being offered of assisting a movement to rid the North-West of the system, our duty is plain."

Then I have a quotation from the Calgary Herald of 13th February, sent by a gentleman whose position ought not to be disputed, because he is one of the Queens counsel lately appointed by the Minister of Justice himself. I refer to Mr. James Bruce Smith, of Calgary. He has sent me the Calgary Herald of the 13th February, containing certain resolutions which I shall read to the House:

"Resolved, That the use of a dual language in official proceedings in the North-West Territories is unnecessary, expensive, and calculated to prevent the complete union of the several nationalities who reside in the Territories, and that to bring about a united Canadian people in this part of the Dominion, the English language alone should be legalized for use in the proceedings of the Legislative

Assembly, the courts, and all other official bodies.

"Resolved, That this meeting heartily endorses the action of the Legislative Assembly at Regina, in reference to the dual language, and requests that the petition presented to the Dominion Government in pursuance of such action be granted.

"Resolved, That a copy of the above resolutions be forwarded to D. W. Davis, M. P., Dalton McCarthy, M. P., the Hon. James A. Loughheed, and the Dominion Government, and that D. W. Davis, M. P., be requested to forward in every way the movement for the abolition of French as an official language in the Territories."

I may, perhaps, be allowed by way of interjection, to read a statement prepared by Mr. Cayley, a gentleman well-known to the First Minister, who, speaking of the cost of publishing the ordinances, resolutions, proceeding, and so forth, in the French language, says:

"The estimated population of the Territories is 100,000, of whom French and Half-breeds form one-fifth. The cost of French printing in 1883 was \$350; in 1887 it had risen to \$1,000 for printing and \$1,000 for translation. The latter cost \$3,000 for three years. Of 500 copies of the Territorial ordinances printed, 126 were distributed; the balance lay on the shelves at Regina, and a large proportion of the 126 went to persons (official and others) who could speak English."

So I think we have sufficiently heard from the North-West Territories as to their views regarding this important matter. But I have heard it said that there have been counter-petitions presented by the hon. member for Alberta (Mr. Davis), petitions purporting to be very numerous signed, asking for the retention of the dual language. I do not doubt that if any one takes the trouble to examine these petitions he will be very much impressed with some of them. There is a great similarity of writing between the signatures to those petitions, and I think we all know that about the easiest thing in the world is to get up a petition. I recollect perfectly well that petitions were sent here very numerous signed against the Franchise Act, that iniquitous measure to which the First Minister is so strongly pledged, and upon an examination of the petitions it appeared that among the names of those asking for the repeal of the Franchise Act was the name of the First Minister himself. The celebrated Chartist petitions contained the signatures of Her Majesty the Queen, Prince Albert, the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell. We find also that upon an investigation into the question of petitions addressed to the House of Commons in England it was found that numerous signed petitions contained only two or three different forms of handwriting. I read somewhere that a petition was addressed to ex-President Cleveland, when he was sheriff in the State of New York, purporting to have been signed by the friends and relatives of the ex-President himself, asking Mr. Cleveland as Sheriff that instead of hanging a criminal he would hang himself. So, I think, we see that very little importance is to be attached to any petitions, no matter how they are prepared, but especially petitions coming from the North-West Territories, containing prayers against the wishes of the representatives of the people there. I think all hon. members must have been greatly impressed with the speech of the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), and I certainly was so impressed. I read it with a great deal of pleasure and care, because, as a literary effort, it could hardly be excelled; but I think that his whole speech from the beginning to the end was based on a wrong assumption. It appears to me that the hon. gentleman started with wrong premises entirely on which he built his argument; that his contention from the beginning to the end of his speech was that it was the intention of the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy) to entirely eradicate the French language.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). So he says. Mr. BARRON. And upon these premises the hon. gentleman built his argument. The hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) says, so the hon. member for North Simcoe says. If he says so, I have not heard it; and if he says so now, I will take my seat and not support his Bill, because I say it would be criminal, indeed, to endeavor to shut the mouths entirely of the French people, and eradicate the French language. What did the hon. member for Bothwell say?

"The hon. gentleman proposes to act towards the French population of this country in much the same way that the brother of Robert, Duke of Normandy, acted towards him. He proposes to put out their eyes. He says: 'Forget your mother tongue, forget the orators and statesmen, the novelists and historians, the poets and philosophers of France, and then you will begin to qualify yourselves for becoming good British subjects. If you understand the language, if you appreciate its beauties, if you admire its expression or its wisdom, or its elasticity, then it is impossible that you can be a loyal subject, it is impossible that you can be devoted to the maintenance of the Federal union. This is the position that the hon. gentleman has taken.'"

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). Hear, hear. Mr. BARRON. The hon. member for Bothwell says "hear, hear." All I can say is this, that I do not understand that to be the position of the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy); but, on the contrary, if language means anything, if the English language can be comprehended, I understood him to say the direct opposite—that he has no desire to eradicate the French language or destroy it, but that, simply for purposes of convenience, he desires that in the North-West Territories, as his Bill says, section 110 of the North-West Territories Act, providing that the proceedings be printed in both languages, should be repealed.

An hon. MEMBER. Ask him. Mr. BARRON. We have asked him; we have his speech.

Concluded on page 8.