

# DEBATE ON BILINGUAL QUESTION RESUMED

## Thornton Says Recent Study of Conditions Showed Need For Changing Law

## RIGG DEFENDS MEASURE

## The Committee Reports Election Charges Not Justified--Return- ing Officers Exonerated

That the repeal of the bilingual clause in the Schools act was not contemplated by him during the progress of the political campaign last summer was the statement made on the floor of the legislature yesterday by the minister of education, Hon. Dr. Thornton.

The statement was made in reply to a direct query from the member for Morris, Jacques Parent.

Hon. Dr. Thornton said that it was not until last October that he, after a careful study of existing conditions, arrived at the conclusion that legislation was necessary. Up to that time he had thought that the conditions could be remedied without the repeal of the clause. He had explained the conditions, outlined in the report which he had recently made to the house, to the members of the cabinet and later to the members of the Liberal side of the house, and as a result the bill had been introduced.

The debate on the bilingual question was continued yesterday. J. W. Wilton completed his speech and made a strong finish.

Jacques Parent (Morris), spoke earnestly against the bill, but was not harsh or severe in his remarks. He pointed out that their language was very dear to the hearts of the French people and that they felt very strongly any attempt to interfere with the use of the language in their schools.

### Bill Supported.

J. H. McConnell (Hamilton), made a brief but earnest address in favor of the bill and pleaded for the elimination of lanceur in the discussion. He declared that the speech of Mr. Talbot (La Verand've) was "cold and cruel and invited retaliation."

R. A. Rigg spoke vigorously in defense of the bill. He said he had never discussed the question in his campaign, although there were many Ruthenian electors in his constituency. His Liberal opponent had spread about a circular stating that the government would not interfere with the Laurier-Greenway agreement, and the fact that he (Rigg) had been elected was an indication to him as to how the people felt.

Arthur Lobb (Rockwood) began what promised to be one of the best speeches of the debate, and was speaking at 6 o'clock when he moved the adjournment.

The report of the privileges and elections committee was presented by the chairman, S. E. Clement (Brandon). It fully exonerated the deputy returning officers as to the first charge made by Mr. Rigg that they had obstructed properly qualified electors. The report also dealt with the spoiled ballots and declared that there was no evidence to show that the returning officers had anything to do with the spoiling marks.

Mr. Rigg expressed himself as satisfied with the report, especially as there was a clause which said that the investigation had been in the public interests.

Col. Clingan (Virden), spoke to a resolution asking for the transfer of the resources of the province from the Dominion. The resolution was seconded by A. Prefontaine, leader of the opposition, and was warmly

endorsed by Premier Norris. It was adopted unanimously.

### Wilton Objects to Report.

Mr. Wilton, resuming his address on the Bilingual bill, criticized a report of his address of Thursday in the Winnipeg Tribune. He objected to the adjective "Inflammatory" as applied to his address, and denied that he accused the opposition of being Nationalists of the Bourassa type. The fact was, he had said there was an apparent similarity between some sentiments of the opposition and those of the Quebec Nationalists. But the hon. members had denied that they held Nationalist doctrines, and he accepted the disclaimer.

Mr. Wilton also took exception to a statement attributed to him in the Free Press. He was reported as saying that a deputation of friends of bilingualism had waited on him before the last election. This, however, was a mistake. The deputation had called on him only a few days ago. It was then that he had stated his views. He was sorry, but he did not wish to claim something to which he was not entitled.

Mr. Wilton referred to a statement to the effect that Canada was not conquered by the British. To show that it was the speaker read from an article in the Encyclopedea Britannica, detailing the conditions of the Treaty of Paris. If he said

Canada had not been conquered then Wolfe was not a hero. Mr. Wilton made other quotations tending to establish the sovereignty of the British in this Dominion.

#### Discovery Not Enough.

Referring to the claim that original occupation conferred constitutional rights on a people, Mr. Wilton said discovery was not enough. It was necessary also to have the power to hold. La Verandrye had penetrated the west before other white men. Alto, La Salle had discovered the Mississippi and had voyaged along that river to its mouth. If discovery conferred constitutional rights France had such rights at New Orleans today. In 1869 the Hudson's Bay company had surrendered to the British crown all its rights in the Northwest. Would the Dominion government have bought that land if the law lords of the empire had not been convinced that the company had a right to convey it? It was not likely. Now the province of Manitoba was comprised within the Hudson's Bay grant. It was, therefore, clearly shown that this land did not belong to Britain by nature of the Treaty of Paris, but by virtue of a conveyance from the Hudson's Bay company. No treaty rights, therefore, could affect it.

Mr. Wilton said it had been argued that certain legislation conferred rights on the French in Manitoba. But one legislature could not bind a subsequent one. It was the undoubted right of every legislature to repeal the acts of its predecessors. The speaker denied that he was actuated by any motive against the French-Canadians. He had many personal friends among them. But he believed that bilingual schools were contrary to the best interests of the people. The bill was in the interest of the foreign-speaking people from Europe. How could they become citizens without a knowledge of English? At present, they were pariahs.

#### Full Rights Should be Granted.

Full rights should be granted to them, so that they might develop their possibilities. Who knew that these people might not produce great men for the future—great statesmen, economists, musicians or poets? In conclusion, the speaker appealed to the house to pass the bill in the interest of the language that had made the empire. The empire in reality rested on the language. If there were no general use of it, the empire would become like the Balkan states.

Jacques Parent (Morris) said he had assumed a duty and he had to perform it. In the campaign of 1914 very little had been said about the school question. Mr. Parent said that in 1915, however, Premier Norris had told the Letellier electors that he would not disturb the Laurier-Greenway agreement. It was quite a surprise, now, after the election, that the attitude should be changed. He would vote against the bill because he had promised his constituents to stand by the Greenway-Laurier agreement. He wanted to ask the minister of education if he had not had the change in his mind before the last campaign.

Mr. Parent referred to a committee which he termed "the committee of wise men." They held that English was God's chosen language. He thought the minister of education was a member of that committee.

Mr. Parent thought the government had made a mistake in bringing the bill into the house at a time of war and struggle. (Cheers.)

#### Influence of Free Press.

Mr. Parent went on to allude to the Free Press and its influence in regard to the bilingual question. Then he proceeded to ask the minister of education if he had not had the abolition of the bilingual clause in mind during the campaign of last summer.

Hon. Dr. Thornton in answer to the direct appeal, said: "When I took office I did so hoping to be able to deal with the difficult problem without having to resort to legislation. It was only after several months of study and investigation that I reluctantly explained the conditions to my colleagues and that I feared it would be necessary to bring in a bill. I consulted with nobody but the members of the cabinet and the members of this side of the house, and the bill followed. I did not have at any time until October last any expectation that I would have to deal with the bilingual clause by legislation. I had no such expectation or intention when I took office."

Mr. Parent, on resuming, said that he was surprised that the government had not consulted with one or more of the leading Frenchmen of the province. He declared they should have consulted their own French supporters. How could the government expect that the French would have any confidence in them in the future? He believed there was a certain committee in this province that ran the whole show. The movement had emanated from a few and those few had succeeded. "I have no use for the extremist," said Mr. Parent, "but when a candidate is elected on certain promises he should stand by them. He cannot be expected to change in six months."

Mr. Parent said the language question was more important than the liquor question. He had great respect and sympathy for the temperance movement, but the language question was closer to the hearts of the people. He was very sorry that the government was determined to go on with the bill.

Mr. Parent said he was no lawyer, but he held that the Confederation act gave certain rights to the French people.

#### Ruthenians at Disadvantage

In regard to the part of Hon. Dr. Thornton's report dealing with the Ruthenian schools, Mr. Parent said that these people were at a disadvantage. They had been dumped on the poorest lands in the province. He understood that in certain localities they had made great progress. As to the German and French children in his own constituency of Morris, 60 to 75 per cent of them now spoke English. An English-speaking teacher in a district which was wholly French-speaking or Ruthenian or German-speaking, as the case might be would have little success.

J. H. McConnell, Hamilton, paid a compliment to the French people of the province. He was sorry that the criticism on both sides had got so warm. He declared the speech of P. A. Talbot, La Verandrye, had been cold and cruel and of a nature to invite retaliation. He thought the question should be reasoned, but without rancor. He would never call a Frenchman a foreigner. He hated the word and would apply it to no man who had made Canada his home.

Mr. McConnell denied vigorously that the members of the government had tried to stampede the private members on this question. He further declared that the war was no excuse for not going on with the business of the province.

Mr. McConnell said he wished to ask this question of the French members: "Do you represent 55 per cent of the French people of this province?"

A. Prefontaine Carillon—"Ninety-eight and a half per cent."

Mr. McConnell said there was only one Frenchman in his constituency.

A. Benard, Iberville—"What does he think about it?"

Mr. McConnell—"He's a good Liberal."

Mr. Benard—"You're going to lose that fellow." (laughter).

#### Rigg Supports Bill.

R. A. Rigg, North Winnipeg, expressed himself in favor of abolition of bilingual teaching in schools. No pressure other than his own observance of public affairs had been brought to bear upon him. He could not admit that because French was the first language spoken in the west, it was entitled to special privileges. As well might one argue

that the Indians were entitled to special language privileges. The argument of priority was unsound. Then there was the treaty argument. Nowadays it was fashionable to term any deviation of any kind from a treaty as "a scrap of paper." That phrase was being overworked. The past had to go whenever it lay in the path of civilization, treaties or no treaties. Otherwise treaties were barnacles upon the ship of progress. It might be the highest wisdom and virtue to break a promise. Therefore, he could not accept without further examination the argument that the premier was not keeping his word. The minister of education had given a masterly presentation of his case. It was the government's first duty to secure to every child an education such as would secure its highest economic welfare. The English language, which was the everyday language and the commercial language, should be taught as efficiently as possible to every child. As it was, the children, were ill-prepared for the battle of life. The vast majority left school before reaching grade eight. What must be the effect when another language was added to the school curriculum? It must be to the disadvantage of the child. Where three or four languages were taught an intolerable condition of chaos was created. He knew nothing of any special rights of the French. If any such existed they should not hold as against other non-English-speaking nationalities in the province.

#### Equal Rights Basis.

If there was to be bilingualism it must be based upon equal rights for all. Some of the French were evidently willing to have such rights denied the other nationalities.

Mr. Hamelin—"Who made that statement?"

Mr. Rigg said the statement had been made on the floor of the house. Two days before last election day a circular signed by one of his Liberal opponents, and printed in Ruthenian had been distributed by one of his Liberal opponents. That circular had promised that there would be no interference with bilingualism. In spite of that, although he, the speaker, had made no pronouncement upon the subject of bilingualism, large numbers of Ruthenians had voted for him. To him it was a matter for pity that so many of his constituents could be worked up over the teaching of their mother tongue, when many of them could hardly afford to send their children to school at all. He thought the government was taking the correct course. The bill had his unqualified support. It was in the best interests of the children of the province, irrespective of nationality.

A. J. Lobb, Rockwood, said he represented many nationalities. He conceived it his duty to vote for the repeal of the bilingual clause. He wished to discuss the matter dispassionately. The French people he feared, had got the question of bilingualism mixed with religion.

Mr. Hamelin—"No, they haven't."

Mr. Hamelin had a great imagination. He conceived the government as desiring to tear the French children from their mother's knee and

pour English down their throats like castor oil. (laughter). Very little had been brought forward on behalf of nationalities other than the French, although others were strongly represented in the province. If the premier had changed his position then he thought all the more of him, and was the more inclined to follow him. The conditions as revealed by the department of education, had become intolerable.

#### Conditions at Teulon.

Mr. Lobb read extracts from a letter written to him by Mr. Cuning, principal of the Teulon consolidated school regarding conditions there. Under the law five rooms of the school demand bilingual teachers. Bilingual teaching had been demanded more than once. Ruthenian children coming to the school from English schools were better informed than those from the bilingual schools.

Continuing, Mr. Lobb said he was not afraid of facing his constituents on the bilingual question. He had received petitions from all the different nationalities asking for the abolition of bilingualism. His constituents were 10 to 1 in favor of its abolition.

In reply to Mr. Benard, Mr. Lobb said 17 French voters in his constituency were against bilingualism.

Mr. Benard claimed that that was not the same thing as being in favor of the bill.

Mr. Lobb said he had great confidence in the Ruthenian people. What was needed was the removal of agitators from amongst them. He was surprised at the grasp of public affairs shown by Ruthenians in his constituency. He had never made any pledge regarding bilingualism. He had been defeated in 1914 by \$30,000 spent by the Roblin government on roads in Rockwood. In 1915 he had been elected by people indignant at the parliament building frauds.

At 6 o'clock Mr. Lobb moved the adjournment of the debate.

The premier then moved adjournment of the house until Monday at 8 p.m.

#### Report on Election Charges.

S. E. Clement (Brandon), chairman of the privileges and elections committee, presented the report of that committee as to the charges of election irregularities made on the floor of the house by R. A. Higg (North Winnipeg, Seat B). The report, which was adopted by the house, was as follows:

"Your committee have further investigated charge No. 1 contained in the motion of the member for Winnipeg North, Seat B, referred to your committee: "That certain deputy returning officers did unlawfully obstruct registered voters in their intention to cast their ballot."

"Your committee heard all the evidence adduced, including that of the deputy returning officer and the three voters named, and finds there was no justification for the said charges, but on the contrary, your committee finds that the deputy charged performed his duties under exceptional and difficult circumstances with the honest endeavor to observe the election act in all respects.

"Your committee further investi-

gated under the order of your honorable house:

"That authority be given to investigate the ballots which have been marked as found in Polls 1 and 32 (M-Z) and 31 (M-Z); and that instructions be given to examine witnesses, including the deputy returning officers and scrutineers, in accordance with the recommendation of the select standing committee on privileges and elections."

"The honorable member for Winnipeg North, Seat B, withdrew the charge relating to Poll No. 1, and your committee examined the spoiled ballots in Poll 31 (M-Z) and Poll 32 (M-Z), and heard the evidence of all witnesses produced, including the deputy returning officers, poll clerks and scrutineers of these polls.

"No evidence was given which would indicate in any way how any marks were made on these ballots, which caused them to be 'spoiled'; but it is only fair to the deputy returning officers to say that no evidence was adduced which in any way tended to incriminate them.

"Your committee, considering the investigations to have been in the interest of the public, recommends that costs of counsel engaged and witness fees of the witnesses who attended be paid by the government upon certification of the senior taxing master of the court of king's bench."

### Rigg Satisfied.

Mr. Rigg said he did not wish to enter into any discussion. He was quite satisfied to find that the committee agreed that the investigation had been in the public interest, and that it considered that the fees of counsel should be paid.

"I am convinced," said Mr. Rigg, "that the work has been valuable in that it has indicated lines along which further precautions are desirable in order to safeguard the will."