

A GREAT NORTHWEST VICTORY

Notwithstanding the success of the amendments to Mr. McCarthy's bill, the main object of the bill has been gained. Despite the demands of the French, the Parliament of Canada has refused to declare that French as an official language has been established in the Northwest to stay. This is a most important point gained.

While Parliament will not go as far as Mr. McCarthy desired, and itself abolish the dual language system in the Northwest, it has absolutely refused to yield to French dictation and has left the matter an open question to be settled by the people of the Territories themselves. The latter would have preferred that Parliament should have abolished the obnoxious system, but they can not complain if the question is placed in their own hands for settlement and final disposal. There is, of course, in Sir John Thompson's resolution some "taffy" for the French, but the great feature is that Parliament absolutely abandon its claim to dictate to the Territories in the matter.

A few years ago this dual language system was forced on the Territories: today Parliament says to the Northwest, "You may rid yourselves of this system if you wish, and we shall now legislate accordingly. The matter rests with you." There is here an immense stride in the right direction, an absolute retreat from the position of a few years ago. So tied down by French influence was Parliament three years ago, or even two years ago, that such a declaration on its part could not have been obtained. Today things have changed, the French influence is on the wane; the French vote has failed to control a Canadian Parliament.

At this time of writing it is not known whether the French members will support Sir John Thompson's amendment or not. If they do it will be because they have practically no alternative. They were powerless to carry their own amendment and they may submit to what they cannot hope to defeat. They have to choose between the Thompson amendment and the McCarthy bill, and they choose the amendment, which, from their point of view, is the least of two evils. The great majority of English speaking members of the Commons, acting together, regardless of party, have settled the policy of Parliament and that in a sense different from what the French desire. French dictation has had a check, and none know so well as the French themselves how

serious is the check they have sustained. If we are not greatly mistaken this will not be the last of their reverse.

The Northwest may not be populous; it may not have reached the full provincial stature; it may not be influential in Parliament, measured by votes. But the fact remains that in this first great struggle with French influence, which many have regarded as invincible, this Northwest stripling has come out practically a victor. The Northwest has aroused into activity the long dormant feeling in Canada that this is a British country, that the English language is all sufficient as the official language of the country, and that the time has come when no man should be ashamed to say so and back his opinion with his vote.

Source: *Calgary Daily Herald* (February 22, 1890).