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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BILINGUALISM: ADDRESS DELIVERED
BEFORE THE QUEBEC CANADIAN CLUB ***

ADDRESS
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
QUEBEC CANADIAN CLUB
AT QUEBEC
TUESDAY, MARCH 28th, 1916
BY
The Honorable N. A. BELCOURT, K.C., P.C.
BILINGUALISM



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BY

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Gentlemen of the Canadian Club:—Your president has asked me to address you this afternoon in the English language. It is with great pleasure that I received this invitation and that I avail myself of the privilege of speaking to you in that language with regard to the very troublesome, somewhat distorted, and certainly much misrepresented school question in your sister province. First of all, I wish to assure you that I shall not make a speech. I desire, in as simple and lucid English as I can command, to endeavor to explain to you the difficulties of that school question, addressing myself preferably to your intelligence, rather than to your hearts.

I want, if I can, to enlighten you as much as possible with regard to this school trouble, a trouble which unfortunately is not a new one for us in Ontario, which we have had many times in the past, and which I am none too sure we shall not have again in the future. This time, as you know, it has broken out over the notorious regulation No. 17. That has been the center of the storm, and until the question it has raised is solved it must, I am afraid, continue to be a storm center. I want to tell you what is the real meaning, what is the object and what will be the effect of this regulation. I am going to give you concrete evidence of everything that I propose to tell you.

Let me tell you also that I will do so with the greatest care and moderation, and, whilst I feel strongly, as you may imagine, upon this question, I am going to suppress my own feelings and make a calm and dispassionate analysis of the question. I will leave it to your intelligence and to your own sympathy to decide what course of action each one of you individually may feel called upon to follow.

Regulation No. 17 has been designed, enacted and enforced with no other object than the gradual proscription of the French language in the primary schools of the Province of Ontario. I say there is no question about that, and if anyone of you will take the trouble to follow me closely, and afterwards, if any doubts remain about the matter, and you will take up the regulation and study it carefully, I am sure you will agree with me.

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The regulation treats of the use of French in the primary classes in Ontario in two ways: First, as a means of instruction or communication; and, second, as a subject of study.

Now, as a means of instruction, that is, as a medium of communication between the teacher and the pupil, the use of that language in all schools, in all classes, at all stages, and on every subject is limited to where, in the opinion of the Chief Inspector of the Province, IT IS NECESSARY. In other words, as a medium between the teacher and the pupil, the French language cannot be used with French-speaking children to impart to them any information on any subject whatsoever, unless the Chief Inspector has previously decided that in the case of each particular child the use of the French language is absolutely necessary because the child does not understand enough English to receive instruction in that language. I say without hesitation that if anyone of you will read regulation No. 17 you will come to no other conclusion than that.

And you can imagine how impracticable and impossible it would be for the Chief Inspector, with all his other duties, to examine each individual child in the hundreds of schools in the Province of Ontario to ascertain if such child understands the English language well enough to receive instruction in English.

Now, as a subject of study. As a subject of study there is a distinction to be made between the schools which were in existence prior to the enactment of the regulation, and the schools subsequently established. That is, prior to the month of June, 1912, the use of the French language as a subject of study was confined to begin with to the elementary subjects of reading, composition and grammar. In the schools then in existence, subject to the approval again of the Chief Inspector, these subjects may be taught to the French Canadian children whose parents demand that they shall be taught those subjects. The maximum time fixed is one hour, but the Chief Inspector may increase that by special order given by himself. But in all cases, let me repeat, these subjects cannot be taught for one hour or one minute to any French-speaking child in any class, in any school in Ontario, unless the Chief Inspector has pronounced upon each individual case. I said a moment ago that the time is limited to one hour, but he may make one minute if chooses. With reference to the use of the French language, whether as a means of instruction and communication, or as a subject of study, the decision of the Chief Inspector is in every case final and conclusive. There is no appeal.

I told you a moment ago that I would endeavor to give you concrete evidence of what I say.

The regulation, as I have said, was promulgated in the year 1912. There were then hundreds and hundreds of separate schools in Ontario—corresponding to your dissentient schools in this province—where French had been a subject of study, where French had been used as a means of communication. And the permission to use French as a subject of study, as I have already explained, is confined to these schools. In all schools established after the month of June, 1912, the French language is banished at once, completely and forever; and I propose to prove it to you in a very conclusive way.

In the Green Valley case, in the county of Glengary, was a case brought by Scotch-Catholic rate-payers against the Roman Catholic school trustees because during one hour of the day the teacher, who was a French-Canadian, taught in French for fifty minutes reading, grammar and

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composition, and gave ten minutes to catechism in French. An action was taken for an injunction, and the court granted the injunction. It was proved in the case that about seventy-five per cent of the rate-payers and seventy-five per cent of the pupils were French-Canadians. The injunction was granted and when the trustees continued to employ this system they were called up before the judge on a charge of contempt of court, with an application to commit them to imprisonment. The judge ordered that each of them should pay a fine of five hundred dollars, not because they had taught French reading, grammar and composition for fifty minutes each day, but because for ten minutes of each day catechism had been taught in French to the French-Canadian pupils. Now, Catechism is something that is always taught in a Catholic separate school. That is the very principle—that is the reason why separate schools were established by law. So you will see the extent to which French is prohibited in Ontario under this regulation.

Now, with reference to the use of the French language as a subject of study in the schools since 1912 we have had several complete and authoritative demonstrations of the meaning of the regulation. In the City of Windsor there were in 1912 three Roman Catholic Separate Schools, namely, the "Sacred Heart," with 45 per cent, "St. Francois," with 65 per cent, and "St. Edmond," with 85 per cent of French speaking Catholic pupils. Prior to 1912 French was a subject of study in the Sacred Heart school only. French has continued since 1912 to be a subject of study in that school. Prior to 1912 there was no French taught in St. Francois and St. Edmond School; since 1912 the trustees of these two schools have applied to the Department, for permission to teach French in these two schools for one-half hour in one of them and for one hour in the other. The following letter from the Department peremptorily denies them the right to have even one minute of French in these two schools:

Catholic Separate School Board.

Windsor, Ontario.

"The Minister of Public Instruction requests me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of August 8th, and to say in answer that he has studied the subject carefully and finds that the regulations of the Department of Education do not allow French to be taught as a subject of study in any of the separate schools of the city of Windsor, with the exception of the Sacred Heart School. Consequently, with a reasonable delay, you will make such changes in the organization of your school as may be necessary under this regulation."

This letter was signed by Mr. Colquhoun, Deputy Minister of Education in Ontario, and is dated October 31st, 1914. Now, the other day the acting minister of the department, the Hon. Mr. Ferguson, published a long statement covering nearly two pages of newspaper, explaining this matter. With regard to this particular case, concerning the schools in the city of Windsor, his answer was, I respectfully submit, unworthy of himself, unworthy of the province, and especially unworthy of the great subject of education. His answer was that the children of the French-Canadian parents at Windsor had not been refused anything to which they were entitled under regulation 17. That was his answer, begging the whole question.

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May I now give you a very independent and impartial opinion as to the effect and nature of this regulation? Within a year after it was promulgated and sought to be enforced, the six inspectors appointed by the Government, for the very purpose of enforcing the regulation, were called to Toronto by the Head of the Department of Education, to make a report of their findings after the regulation had been in force about a year. The six inspectors were three English-speaking and three French-speaking inspectors. They met in Toronto, and, after comparing notes, made a unanimous report to the Minister of Education, and please remember that this report and the investigation from which it arose were both made at the request of the Minister of Education. The report was unanimous. I shall not quote it all, but only a few lines:

"The inspectors agree that the above regulation (17) has not been effective, for the following reasons:

"IT WAS TAKEN TO MEAN THAT FRENCH COULD NOT BE USED AS A LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND COMMUNICATION;

"IT WAS REGARDED AS AN ATTEMPT TO GRADUALLY ELIMINATE THE FRENCH LANGUAGE FROM THE ENGLISH-FRENCH SCHOOLS."

That is not my statement, remember, gentlemen, but the unanimous statement of three English inspectors and three French inspectors charged with the duty of enforcing this regulation.

Naturally the French-Canadians of Ontario, of whom there are 250,000, who have in the past enjoyed the right of teaching their language to their own children, promptly and strongly resented all this. But they have not been the aggressive and turbulent agitators which they have been represented to be. On the contrary, they took the constitutional means of going to the Department about the matter. Memorials, representations and calm and dignified protests were made. Delegations were sent to Toronto. On one occasion the chairman of the Ottawa separate school board went to Toronto as the representative of most of the different separate school boards throughout the province. Nothing came of it. Sir James Whitney told them that he was not going to establish RACIAL SCHOOLS in the Province of Ontario, whatever the meaning of that

may be. He sought to make them feel that he looked upon the use of French in the Ontario schools as introducing racial schools.

Gentlemen, I have to touch on these points very briefly because I know your time is precious, and I do not want to trespass upon your indulgence. I might say that such litigation followed. However I do not propose to go into that as I do not know that much profit could be derived from it in the time which you have kindly allowed me.

Then this statute was passed last year, of which we are now asking the disallowance, and I am going to speak of that briefly. I am sure you have heard something of the petitions which have been circulated, not only in the Province of Ontario, but also in Quebec, calling upon the Dominion Government to disallow this statute passed in 1915. The statute has two effects, the validating of regulation 17, which in the meantime was being tried in the courts, and the purpose of establishing the Ottawa Separate School Commission, of which I have no doubt you have also heard.

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The act takes all the powers from the Roman Catholic Separate School Trustees elected by the Roman Catholic rate-payers and confers them upon the Commission. This Commission—which I shall not qualify, but which I shall describe—was composed of three gentlemen, Mr. Denis Murphy, Mr. D'Arcy McGee, and Mr. Charbonneau. The first two being Irish Catholics, and the other a French-Canadian Catholic.

The Roman Catholic population of Ottawa is composed of nearly 50,000 people, of whom about 33,000 are French-Canadians and about 17,000 are Irish Catholics. As I said, the Government appointed two Irish Catholics and made one of them chairman, the other vice-chairman, and Mr. Charbonneau simply a member. This commission was vested with all the powers which the board of elected trustees had the statutory right and the duty to administer. You can imagine, gentlemen, how efficiently these schools could be conducted under such conditions and with such a commission. You can imagine the provocation it was to the French-Canadian population of Ottawa. I should add that one of the commissioners—they are all respectable men—but one was in the unfortunate position of being a license holder under the Government which appointed him. Mr. Charbonneau, or the firm to which he belonged, held a license for the sale of intoxicating liquors. He held his license from the Government appointing him, and this was the man who was going to administer these schools in the capital of Canada. You can imagine the resentment of the people and how difficult—how impossible—it was for such a commission to administer in a proper way the schools confided to their care. The result was confusion worse confounded, and considerable agitation, with the result that to-day there are nearly 5,000 children belonging to the English-French schools of Ottawa who are deprived of an education, and have been so deprived for two months. Their teachers have not been paid some of them for five, ten, fifteen and twenty months. The taxes belonging to the French-Canadian supporters of these schools have been used for the payment of the teachers in the schools attended by the Irish Catholics, schools which have not in any way, at any time, under any conditions being interfered with by the French-Canadian people of Ottawa.

Another result of regulation No. 17 is—I doubt if there is anyone in this room who will really believe me, but I assure you that it is true—let me tell you, gentlemen, that to-day the Germans in the Province of Ontario have and are enjoying, with the consent and participation of the Department, rights that are absolutely denied to the French-Canadian population. I knew you would say “shame.” I know no intelligent person will believe this at first, but I pledge you my word that that is the case. I am going to read you regulation 15 so that I shall not be misunderstood. Regulation 15 says: “15. In school sections where the French or German language prevails, the trustees may, in addition to the course of study prescribed for public schools, require instruction to be given in reading, grammar and composition to such pupils as are directed by their parents or guardians to study either of these languages, and in all such cases the authorized text books in French or German shall be used.”

Regulation 17 has abrogated this provision with respect to French in all schools established after June, 1912, and with respect to German the matter remains as it was under regulation 15.

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Now, what is the case of the French Canadians of Ontario, on what do they rely, on what do they base their claim that French should be used in their schools? By the British North America Act it is provided that the rights and privileges enjoyed by Roman Catholics in the Province of Ontario at the time of Confederation, or by the Protestant minority in the Province of Quebec, shall not be interfered with by the provinces. Subject to these rights the provinces are given absolute power to legislate on school matters. There is the whole question so far as the legal and constitutional aspect is concerned. You have to see what in 1867 were the rights of the respective minorities in Ontario and Quebec. So far as Quebec is concerned, it is not and never was subject of misunderstanding. Everyone has agreed as to what the rights of the Protestant minority were and are, and no one has interfered with them. But it is different in Ontario. I have been there for thirty-two years, and it has always been more or less a subject of discussion and dispute. The rights of the Catholics in Ontario in 1867 were the rights given by the act of 1863.

The first part of the act gave to the Roman Catholics the right to elect trustees to conduct the Catholic separate schools, in other words the right to fully administer the schools. Other provisions of the statute dealt with the right to determine the kind and description of the schools, in other words the right to have schools where both languages would be taught, as it had been previous to 1863. Then there was the right to appoint teachers and define their duties; also to appoint inspectors or superintendents. Every one of these essential things has been wiped out

and taken away from the separate schools supporters of the city of Ottawa, not in part, but wholly and completely, and conferred upon Government appointed Commissioners.

Let us see what this means. The questions involved in this controversy are in principle as essential and as important as any question that ever came before the British people. Why, it goes back to Runnymede, when this principle was settled forever—No taxation without representation. The French-Canadians of Ottawa are compelled to pay taxes and they have no representation. They are taxed and have to pay taxes for schools, and yet they have nothing to say regarding the expenditure of their taxes or the conduct of these schools.

What would you say if my good friend, Sir Lomer Gouin, undertook to say to the city of Quebec: I don't like the members that you send to represent you—they don't do things as I like to have them done, and hereafter you are not going to select your representatives, but I am going to name or appoint them for you; or if he arrogated to himself the right to have your dissentient schools conducted and administered wholly not by your elected trustees or Commissioners, but by certain persons chosen by him. Gentlemen, I say in all solemnity that there is no difference between that and the things that have been done in the Province of Ontario. Am I not right in saying that this question should be of the deepest concern to all lovers of British constitutional law and constitutional history?

Now, as to the second point, the kind, number and description of schools.

Prior to Confederation there were French schools—not English-French schools, but exclusively French schools under the Department of Public Instruction in the Province of Ontario. I use that term advisably, because it was so called at that time, although it is now called the Department of Education. Time and again it occurred, with the approval of the educational authorities, that teachers who could not speak a word of English, but only German or French, were employed in the schools of Ontario. There were schools in the Province of Ontario before Confederation where no English was taught, and that with the sanction of the Department. In many parts of Ontario there were schools, many of them, where there was only French, and there were many others where both the English and the French languages were taught. They had French teachers and French inspectors, and French text books. I am referring to this in order that you can fix in your minds what were the conditions in 1867. In other words, what were the conditions which the Act of Confederation, an Imperial Act, has made perpetual in Ontario, as well as in Quebec.

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We had these rights in 1867; in what way and when have we been deprived of these rights—on what authority have they been taken away? Absolutely none. There was only one authority that could deprive the Roman Catholics French-Canadians of Ontario of their rights in that province, or the Protestant minority of their rights in the Province of Quebec. There is only one authority, not the Ontario Legislature, not the Quebec Legislature, not the Dominion Parliament, but the Parliament of Westminster. The Act of Confederation is an Imperial Act which no Canadian Parliament or Legislature can in any way affect. The Imperial Parliament has not dealt with the question. If I have made it clear to you that there were rights which were enjoyed in 1867, since those rights have not been touched by the only authority that could touch them—have I not made out an absolute case that those are rights which we had then and still have to-day, and ought to have now and in the future?

Section 133 of the British North America Act—and I refer to it because, strangely enough, it has been quoted and relied on by both sides in this controversy—section 133, you will remember, provides that either the English or the French language may be used in the Parliament of Canada, the Legislature of Quebec, and the Federal and Quebec provincial courts, and it places these two languages on an equal footing in such Parliament, Legislature and courts. It is argued by those opposed to us that that is a restrictive provision, a limitative provision, on the doctrine “*inclusio unius fit exclusio alterius*.” I do not think so at all. Here were new forums being created: The Parliament of Canada, the Federal Courts, where it was absolutely necessary that the language to be used should be determined without doubt—there should be no doubt that in the Federal Parliament both languages should be official—no doubt that is what was in the minds of the fathers of Confederation.

But, they say, why mention Quebec at all? Why did they say that English could be used in the Legislature of Quebec and why not say that French could be used in the Legislature of Ontario?

The answer to that is that the English language was safeguarded in the Legislature of Quebec simply because our English friends were on that occasion, as usual, a little more practical than we are. They wanted the English language to be official in the Legislature of Quebec, and asked to have it stated in the Act. That was a concession to the Protestant, or rather to the English-speaking minority in the Province of Quebec. Section 133 is not limitative. Some people are apt to look upon this matter in a very strange way. We are told that we are not to claim any rights for the French Language in Ontario, because there is no text of law. I ask you, gentlemen, if you have ever seen anywhere a text of law which says that the English language is the official language of the British Empire? No, there is no such law, none anywhere, not at Westminster, at Ottawa or at Toronto. Why? Simply because language is a natural right—there are rights that we all enjoy which do not need the sanction of law, the right to live, to breathe, the right of property—these are rights which do not need the sanction of law, that is, of any special text of law, but belong inherently to all individuals and everyone is entitled to their enjoyment without any text of law. These rights are the necessary attributes of individual freedom.

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The rights of the minority in the Province of Quebec with reference to their religious tenets and their language have no other and no better foundation than the same rights of the French or Catholics in the Province of Ontario. If we are deprived of the right to use the French language in our schools in the Province of Ontario, and if that is constitutionally sound, there is nothing to prevent the government of the Province of Quebec from saying that in the English schools of the Province of Quebec there shall be no word of English spoken. I should think the contemplation of such a thing would make you shudder. It is really inconceivable with anyone in Quebec.

I have tried to show you the conditions at Confederation. I said I would give you authority for my statements, and I am going to give you the authority of different and most competent people. First of all, I will give you the authority of Sir Oliver Mowat. He had no doubt on this matter, nor had Sir George Ross, and both of them said so in very clear and unmistakable language. As long as their authority lasted the use of the French language in the Province of Ontario was not interfered with, but was treated in a broad and sympathetic way. I will quote also from Doctor Ryerson, who was the father of the Ontario school system, and who for thirty-five years exercised undisputed sway over the schools of that province. I will likewise cite Sir James Whitney.

Sir Oliver Mowat, in a speech made at Woodstock, on December 3rd. 1889, said:

“French-Canadians cherish their own language lovingly; they wish their children to love it and be educated in it; but they know it will be for their interest to be familiar with English also, and to be educated in English, as well as French. Proscribe French, their mother tongue, and they will hate you and have nothing to do with your schools. Permit their own language to receive attention, and they are glad to have their children learn English also as soon and as fast as it can be imparted. Such was the view of the Commissioners as to the proper policy; it is the view of this Government; and it is the view of all intelligent men, except our political opponents. It was the view of Dr. Ryerson and his Council of Public Instruction, even to the extent of putting no pressure whatever on French or German schools, and of awaiting their own spontaneous action as to English and other matters.

“Our opponents insist that the Government should insist on all instruction being given to the French children in the English language. No such regulation was suggested by the Commissioners, and none such has been made, because such a regulation would be absurd; and, instead, of serving the cause of education, would often prevent education altogether. How can you teach in a language which the children do not understand?”

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Gentlemen, I want to quote also a letter of Dr. Ryerson, whose name I have just mentioned, dating as far back as 1857, and this letter, although it contains but four lines, contains the whole thesis upon which this question rests. I invite your special attention to every word of this letter, not only because of the man who wrote it, but on account of the significance of the words he uses. It is as follows:

“24th April, 1857.

“Gentlemen:—

“I have the honour to state in reply to your letter of the 16th instant THAT, AS THE FRENCH IS THE RECOGNIZED LANGUAGE OF THE COUNTRY, as well as the English, IT IS QUITE PROPER AND LAWFUL for the trustees to ALLOW BOTH LANGUAGES TO BE TAUGHT in their schools to children whose parents may desire them to learn both.

“I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

“Your obedient servant,

“(Sgd.) E. Ryerson.”

I also stated that I would quote Sir James Whitney, and that is very much more recent history. Within a few months of the promulgation of regulation No. 17, in fact on the 25th of July, 1911, Sir James Whitney caused this letter to be written:

“25th July, 1911.

“Reverend and Dear Sir:—

“I am directed by the Prime Minister, Sir James Whitney, to acknowledge your letter of the 21st and to state that no change has been made in the school law or the department regulations AFFECTING THE STUDY OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN THE SCHOOLS.

“I AM DIRECTED TO POINT OUT THAT THE QUESTION IS ONE ENTIRELY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES....

“(Signed) A. H. U. Colquhoun.

This letter was written to Reverend Father Chaine, of Arnprior, a town not far from Ottawa.

I spoke to you a moment ago of the right to appoint trustees. I want you, gentlemen, many of whom I have the honour of calling my friends, and whom I see before me, my Protestant friends of Quebec, how would you like it if the Roman Catholic School Committee in this province were to arrogate to itself the right to appoint the teachers in your dissentient schools, and to define their duties? How would you like it? Would you think that was keeping faith with the British North America Act? Would you think that was keeping faith with the Confederation partnership? How would you like it if this same Committee, not only would assume to appoint your teachers and your inspectors, and would take good care also to appoint Catholic inspectors in your Protestant schools—how would you like it? Will you not take that suggestion home with you, gentlemen, and think it over? How would you like this regulation No. 17 to be applied to the Province of Quebec?

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Let me read the two or three most important sections of the regulation and substitute the word "French" for the word "English" and vice versa wherever they occur, and I want you to take that home also and think it over. Let us read section 3 of the regulation No. 17:

3. Subject in the case of each school to the direction and approval of the superintendent of Education (I use that term advisably as corresponding to the term used in Ontario) the following modifications shall also be made in the course of study in separate schools.

The use of ENGLISH FOR INSTRUCTION AND COMMUNICATION.

(1) WHERE NECESSARY, in the case of English-speaking pupils, English may be used as the language of instruction and communication; but such use of English shall not be continued beyond Form 1 (that is the first two years the child goes to school) excepting that on the approval of the Superintendent of Education, it may also be used as the language of instruction and communication in the case of pupils beyond Form 1, who are unable to speak and understand the French language.

Now, gentlemen, will you seriously consider that? How would you like that kind of thing, you the English-speaking people of the Province of Quebec, if you could use your language in your schools, as a means of instruction and communication in the first form, that is during the first two years, only if and when the Superintendent of Education for this Province, after examination of your children, might say it was absolutely necessary to use English?

As a subject of study let us carry on the same process. I will read further from regulation 17, making the same transposition:

"English as a subject of study in separate (or dissentient) schools."

4. In schools where English—(remember, gentlemen, we are now in 1912)—has HITHERTO been a subject of study, the separate (or dissentient) school board may provide, under the following conditions, for instruction in English, reading, grammar and composition in Form 1 to 4, in addition to the subjects prescribed for the separate (or dissentient) schools.

(1) Such instruction in English may be taken only by pupils whose parents or guardians direct that they shall do so, and may, notwithstanding section 3 above, be given in the English language.

(2) Such instruction in English shall not interfere with the adequacy of the instruction in French, and the provision for such instruction in English in the time-table of the school shall be subject to the approval and direction of the Superintendent of Education, and shall not in any day EXCEED ONE HOUR in each class room, except where the time is increased upon the order of the superintendent.

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Would that be agreeable to you, gentlemen, to have only one hour of English in your school, and that confined to reading, composition and grammar, and nothing else, and just one hour—and more than that if it pleased the Superintendent of Education to say that you should have English for one minute only each day, would you be satisfied with that? That is Regulation No. 17 in all its simplicity!

Are you surprised, gentlemen, that the French-Canadians of Ontario have strenuously protested and intend to continue to do so, and have asked the support of the Province of Quebec under conditions of that kind? We have sought the support of our French-Canadian friends in the Province, and we have got it; but I for one am very much more anxious to have the sympathy and the help of the English-speaking people of the Province of Quebec. If I accepted the invitation to come here within half an hour after getting the telegram from my good friend Mr. Paradis, it was because I thought that I might contribute in some small way to assist my English-speaking friends in the Province of Quebec to a proper understanding of the real meaning and object of this very troublesome question.

Perhaps you may think it impertinence on my part, but will you not allow me to say that you owe it to yourselves first of all to look carefully into this matter. To-day it is a question in Ontario, but to-morrow it may be a question in Quebec. Don't you owe it to yourselves to consider this most carefully? But, to put it on a higher ground—because I have unbounded confidence in the feelings of justice and fair play of the Protestants in the Province of Quebec—don't you owe it to

us French-Canadians, in both Provinces, to come to our assistance in the Province of Ontario, where we are seeking the preservation of our most elementary rights? I think you owe it also to Canada, to Confederation, to take a part in this matter. I am not trying to convince you of something which is not right or just or fair, but convince yourselves, gentlemen, look into these questions, and if you are not satisfied with the explanations that I have given, come to me, or go to some one else in whom you may have more confidence, and find out—learn about it all. Permit me also to say to you, with all the solemnity and earnestness of which I am capable, that it is your duty, because the present is as grave and as dangerous a situation as ever arose in Canada. I say Quebec is as much a partner in Confederation as the other provinces. Confederation is a partnership in which we are all jointly and severally responsible for the performance of duties and obligations assumed by every one of the provinces, and for that reason I am sure—I hope at all events—that you will agree with me, that it is incumbent upon you to look into this very serious matter and do what you can to bring about a just settlement of it.

Nay more, I say in the interests of the Empire—and I am one of those who believe in some form of a united Empire—though no one seems to have yet found the formula, yet I hope it will be found some day—is it not necessary that we should first have national unity, Canadian unity, before we can seriously consider Empire unity? How are you going to bring it about? And is national unity, in Quebec, in Ontario, in Canada, or the British Empire, dependent upon unity of language? How shall we have a united Empire if all parts must speak the English language? How and when are you going to change the 144 dialects of India into English? Then there are Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and other places where French is spoken. And what about South Africa? Here is a colony which a few years ago was under arms against England, and did everything it could do to break the British power. When the time came for England to deal with the Boers she treated them not with her ancient generosity only, but with a measure overflowing—she treated the Boers in a way in which we are not treated in the Province of Ontario. To-day in the Boer States the Boer language and the English language are on an absolute equality. They do not have to ask a superintendent or any one else for one hour a day in the school to learn their national language. And are we, the French-Canadian people, the descendants of the race who colonized not only this country but a large portion of the North American continent, who explored it from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico and from the St. Lawrence to the Rocky Mountains, to leave behind us and bury for ever, a history which has never been surpassed anywhere in the world, for courage, devotion and heroism; are we the descendants of these men, in this Canada of ours, to be deprived of the use of the language of our forefathers? Are we to be told that in order to have a united Canada and a Empire we must forever renounce and deny our origin, our traditions and our beloved language? I ask you, gentlemen, is there any man in the city of Quebec, any Protestant or English-speaking man, who would not despise me if I threw all this to the winds? If I did so I would richly deserve your supreme contempt and you would not be slow in extending it to me—and yet this is what we are asked to do.

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And was there ever a time, gentlemen, less than the present, when Frenchmen any where in the world, let alone in Canada, could be asked to forget their origin and their language? When the France of 1915 and 1916 has compelled the unbounded admiration of the whole world for her sublime courage and devotion. And yet we are asked, we who speak the same language as the men, our full brothers who have fought so nobly in the trenches in Flanders, whose defence of the Verdun forts is the finest and most glorious event of the present horrible war, to forego our French language and all that it carries with it, we are told that our children cannot learn it, and must despise it and allow it to die an unnatural death in Canada. I ask you, my English-speaking friends of the Province of Quebec, will you not come to our rescue and look into this question? I believe that there is not one who has done me the honor to listen to me to-day, and who will take the trouble to seriously ponder over the matter, but will say: Yes, I am going to help our French-Canadian friends in Ontario to solve this question and obtain justice and British fair play.

I hope the appeal which you have permitted me to make to you will bear some fruit, and that the interest, the influence and the sympathy of the English-speaking minority in the Province of Quebec will be aroused, and that you will take such steps as you may think proper to bring about a solution of a question which, I repeat, is of the very gravest character, a question which, if not solved promptly, will bring about—I dare not say what—I would rather let you draw your own conclusions. We French-Canadians of Ontario have done all we can in the Province of Ontario to enlighten public opinion. But all in vain. There is not one English newspaper in the Province of Ontario which has printed or paid the slightest attention to any of the arguments which for four years we have advanced. All our literature has been thrown in the waste-paper basket—not one newspaper has taken the trouble to investigate the question. Our arguments have been met with nothing but contempt and abuse.

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Now, I say again, I, for one, wish to appeal as earnestly, as solemnly as I can, to you English-speaking Protestants and Catholics of the Province of Quebec, for your help and succor in the solution of this momentous situation. I wish to again offer you my most grateful thanks for your very kind attention and indulgence.

The Honorable Mr. JUSTICE McCORKILL:—Mr. Chairman and Senator Belcourt, fellow-members of the Quebec Canadian Club. When I left the Court House to come here, I had not the faintest idea that I was going to be singled out for the duty of moving a vote of thanks for the lecturer of to-day. I came here because I am a Canadian, because I think I have a proper appreciation of the French race and the French language, and thirdly because I have known Senator Belcourt for a good many years. We were students at the same time—I am sorry to have

told you that, because you will think that he is older than he really is—and I knew that what we would hear to-day would be worth hearing.

The English Canadians of the Province of Quebec have been puzzled—I mean the English-Canadians native-born, those who have been brought up with the French-Canadians, who have spoken with them in their language, who have played with them in their school grounds, as I have done, on the lacrosse fields, who have served with them in the ranks of the militia, and in the Legislature.

I am sorry that I was not given warning of the task that was before me. I came here determined to listen, and I have listened. Nothing has gone through my mind as to what I am to say, except to express my humiliation to think that we English-Canadians here have listened to a French lecturer who can speak our language as well as his own, as well as we can ourselves. Of how many of us could the same be said with regard to the French language?

I may say, as far as I have known the speaker of to-day, he is a thorough Canadian, and I am sure that the fact that we all listened to what he has said to-day will produce an effect. I am sure he was moved not only because he is a French-Canadian, but because he is a Canadian, to come here and address us on this occasion. It is a very serious question agitating the Province of Ontario, and we English here, as I said a moment ago, cannot understand how such a feeling should arise.

I have some friends in the Province of Ontario, and I must say they are imbued with the same idea as those who passed regulation No. 17. I am sorry for it; I have done my very best to convince them they were wrong, and I knew they wouldn't feel as they did if they had had the experience I have had with French-Canadians.

I need not tell you that I have been a student of Canadian history from the very earliest days. I have read with the greatest interest the history of the old regime, the opening up of the country, and then of the abandonment of the people by their country, so to speak, and of the tremendous efforts they made to keep the country for themselves. I have read the history of the country under the British regime, and how they have fallen in so well with the administration of justice, the administration in our Legislatures and municipalities under the British system. I believe that a certain French-Canadian at Ottawa is one of the greatest parliamentarians under the British Constitution that we have in any part of the Empire.

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They have adopted our system, but there are two things they have clung to, their religion and their language. I believe that their national sentiment is even stronger than their religious sentiment—I really believe so. The national feeling among them is intensely strong, but I would ask you English, Irish and Scotch descendants born in this country, and brought up here, supposing a regulation similar to No. 17 were passed in the Province of Quebec, what do you think our duty towards it would be? Supposing Sir Lomer Gouin—I cannot imagine it—but supposing he did have the courage, or the nerve, so to speak, to pass a regulation of that kind. There would be a rebellion in this Province, I think. And here we have our French-Canadian brethren in the sister Province who by constitutional means are trying to obtain the repeal or the modification of the regulation, or some other settlement of the question which would be satisfactory to all concerned.

Gentlemen, you didn't come here to hear me, and I am not going to detain you any longer. I wish to express, on behalf of the members of this club, our sense of pleasure and obligation to Senator Belcourt for coming here to address us on this question. I am delighted to see so many English-Canadians here to-day. Some may have felt it required a little extra courage to appear, but I do not think so. It does not mean that you are all in sympathy with everything that has been said, but it means that you want education and enlightenment on this matter. And I am sure the appeal the Senator has made to us to study the question will have its effect. And I will agree with him, in the hope that they may have our sympathy and co-operation in bringing about a satisfactory settlement of the question in Ontario.



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