

(April 8th, 1912.)

The Northwest Provinces and their Relation to Confederation.

BY MR. R. B. BENNETT, M.P.*

MR. BENNETT'S address was delivered at a regular luncheon of the Club held on April 8th, 1912. Unfortunately he spoke so rapidly that the Club's stenographer was unable to secure anything like an adequate report of the speech. Repeated efforts have been made to secure from the speaker himself a complete resumé of a very eloquent deliverance. After holding back this volume for several weeks in the hope of hearing from Mr. Bennett the editor has resolved to go to press with the following fragmentary report. In part Mr. Bennett said:—

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—I esteem it a great privilege and pleasure to address so large an audience in a great city such as Toronto, a centre of intelligence and wealth. I sometimes think that we members of Canadian Clubs have little appreciation, perhaps, of our responsibilities. I assure you nothing but a sense of great responsibility induces me to address you upon a subject which I cannot hope to do justice to in the time allowance, for it is very difficult to press into a few minutes the history of a country so vast. Yet that duty devolves upon me this afternoon.

I will point out that the territory of which I am to speak has as old a history as can possibly be found in this country. Consider it from one standpoint: Henry Hudson penetrated the sea which bears his name in the eastern part of the continent, and an agitation arose shortly afterwards which resulted in the creation of the Hudson's Bay Company. One can readily understand that prior to 1670 the work of exploring was done largely by the noble missionaries, who went up and down the rivers, and travelled among the vast ranges of snow-capped mountains, but they were not explorers and colonizers. In 1670 the Hudson's Bay Company began to establish itself, and after that for two hundred years the history of the Northwest is practically that of the Hudson's Bay Company, broken by the story of Selkirk's colonizing of Manitoba, the career of

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the Northwest Fur Company, and the amalgamation of the two companies,—the first Canadian merger, I think.

Mr. Bennett proceeded to speak of the exploring work of the Hudson's Bay Company, which sent great parties across the continent. He named Simpson, Mackenzie, and a number of missionaries whose noble self-sacrifice added to the knowledge of the country and its development, including Grandin, Archbishop Tache, Lacombe, Bishop Bompas, Bishop Reeve, Archbishop Machray, George Young and John McDougall, whose names are intimately associated with the history of that part of the country. From 1670 to 1870 that history was practically that of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose operations extended from Fort William to the Pacific, and from the international boundary to the Arctic Circle, its bands of fur traders traversing the western part of the continent in the period before the railways were built, and doing for the British Empire much the same on this continent as the East India Company did for it in winning and holding the Indian Empire. Upon the flap of our National robe, he said, was embroidered the name of the Hudson's Bay Company. He wished some one would write the history of that country, who would bring to the task the genius of Macaulay and the patience of Green, combined with some of the qualities of Hallam, and so make an immortal name for himself, while doing a great service for his nation.

Next Mr. Bennett spoke of the mission of Sir George E. Cartier and Sir John A. Macdonald to England to perfect the Canadian title to the West. One who went with them was a man from Toronto who was for some time the correspondent of the *Toronto Globe* in the West, Mr. Charles Mair, who still lives in Western Canada. These men believed in the possibilities of the country, and they completed their contract, the title costing over £300,000. Hon. Wm Macdougall was sent out by the Federal Government to establish a stable government in the Province of Manitoba, but his mission proved a failure. Louis Riel made himself the head of a Provisional Government and set up a republic, so that for a short time a flag other than that of Great Britain flew over part of that country, the white flag of the Riel Republic.

Referring then to the achievements of Archbishop Tache and especially of Sir Donald Smith, now Lord Strathcona, a man of great, broad sympathy, sterling sense, and splendid judgment, a statesman and patriot who did much more to bring peace to the country than almost any other, the speaker remarked that the example of that man, now holding such a position in the House of Lords in the mother of parliaments, was calculated to stipulate the ambition of every young man;

it had raised every man's place, and should especially commend itself to the judgment of the younger men in the Canadian Clubs.

The Wolseley expedition failed, but the Manitoba Act was passed, which made that Province become, in the words of Lord Dufferin, the first square upon the chequer board. The first Board of Health in Western Canada was formed in 1871 at Edmonton. The Royal North-West Mounted Police was formed in 1873, the splendid force, with whose history such names are associated as those of Sir George French, Imrie, Col. Herchmer, Steele and McLeod. That finest mounted force of constabulary, almost, the world has ever known, as is admitted by almost universal consent, brought across the face of the country such a change as to maintain law and order and justice over the vast region from within the Arctic Circle, where one of its forts is situated, to the boundary, where there is another, and from the snow-tipped Rockies to the plains. One thing we have to be proud of is that the members of this force come from our own land. They have made British Institutions to be regarded as synonymous with justice, fair play, equality under the law.

In 1875 the Government of the day thought it wise to establish more elaborate provisions for the administration of that part of the country, and so it passed the Northwest Territories Act. The last Council of eleven, under Gov. Morris of Manitoba for that year met on the 28th Nov., 1875. On the 7th of October, 1876, the Act came into force, Hon. David Laird being the first Governor, with a Council of five—a Parliament of five members! It met at Swan River, which was the first capital, within the Province of Manitoba; then the capital was moved to Battleford and later to Regina, formerly called Pile-of-Bones Creek, where a wild boom in town lots and subdivisions occurred. Among those prominent in affairs at that time, Mr. Bennett named Senator Forget, Mr. Hayter Reed, Judge Richardson, Hon. Frank Oliver, Senator Ross, Mr. Turriff, and Mr. F. W. G. Haultain. The first election was held in 1883. There were then one thousand people, exclusive of Indians, in a territory of one thousand square miles. Gradually the Advisory Council gave place to the Legislature, and more power was given to the representatives of the people. Then began the struggle for provincial autonomy which was kept up for many years.

Mr. Bennett went on to tell of the vast extent and the abounding prosperity of the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Their area is twice that of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, but their population is sparse. The riches of the territory are not known to any person, and their

resources are widely varied. Though in the two Provinces there were last year only about nine hundred thousand people, their contributions to the wealth of Canada was \$200,000,000. A great volume of business is transacted by the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert. The customs duties at Calgary alone, last year amounted to \$2,000,000. This amazing prosperity was one part of the story; but there were always, said Mr. Bennett, difficulties and obstacles that must be overcome, for where there was prosperity there was danger; constantly he had told the people of the West that when people get wealth too soon invariably they are menaced for some time, and if a man gets rich too quickly there are certain consequences and often heartburnings.

Mr. Bennett proceeded:—Now, my friends, I must hasten on, but I would like to give you some impressions, to visualize the conditions in those Provinces. Railroads are being built with great rapidity, rarely have any people been so greatly served, with a population of less than a million in Saskatchewan, there are railroads almost everywhere being built with feverish activity, hundreds of millions of dollars having been spent during the last few years. As one sign of the enormous prosperity during the last eight or ten years I must say that of a half million homesteads granted during the past forty years, 40 per cent. of them have been issued during the last decade.

Saskatchewan last year raised ten million bushels of wheat, more than all the rest of Canada, yet we are cultivating only the fringe of the border, and in Alberta it is the same.

The destiny of Canada, in my judgment, is wrapped up in the history of the two Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. You in this part of Canada have derived benefits from our prosperity. Your money has been loaned upon our mortgages, your banks have established branches in the West, your manufacturers' products have been sold in the West. There is not a young man here but knows that the great increase in the volume of your business has been due to the splendid markets of Western Canada. This amazing and abounding prosperity has been felt everywhere. In the bank balances of Toronto and Hamilton, and in the manufacturing centres of this great Province of Ontario, and less in the Lower Provinces, but everywhere there is a reflection of it.

But you are conscious, from your reading of the newspapers, that notwithstanding this prosperity, still there are evidences of discontent. You read that there is a spirit of unrest and discontent amidst the people of the West and you ask me "Why is this?" I am asked to speak of the problems of the West, and you ask me why there is this discontent. In my

judgment, it is nothing more than just a passing symptom of the unrest that there is in every part of the civilized world. It is manifesting itself in China, where a republic has been set up; in Portugal, under a monarchical government; in England, where it is possible that a revolution may change the government; in the United States; in Mexico; everywhere. Even here I find reputable and responsible men clamoring against the Privy Council, yet that is the only link that binds us to the Mother Land, that and the appointment of the Governor-General, and you are not doing your country any good, nor the country west of the Lakes, by agitation against the Privy Council, for it is there that the victories for Provincial rights have been won.

But this spirit of unrest and discontent you find in the West is after all a symptom of what is seen in the struggle of democracy, the people asserting their authority, in some instances against entrenched wealth, a cry for real leadership, for a better understanding between the governed and the governors.

But in the West there is something else: it is always necessary to study the character of the population. I should like you for a moment with me to see the class and kind of people we are bringing into the Canadian West. There is a great agitation to people the West. Perhaps few of you realize that in the Province of Alberta during the last six years 74 per cent. of the people who came in were from the United States, and in the Province of Saskatchewan 70 per cent. were from the United States. Alberta during the same time received 9 per cent. only from Continental Europe, and 12 per cent. in Saskatchewan came from this source. Our British population was 18 per cent. in Saskatchewan and 17 per cent. in Alberta. My friends, that vast proportion of our population that came from the United States came largely from the States known as "insurgent" States—Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa—these men are the very pick of the American people. They are dissatisfied with conditions in their own country, because they believe, and some, I understand, properly, that the money trust is throttling their very life. They come into Western Canada with a strong disposition to criticize what is done in Eastern America, with prejudices against the institutions of Wall Street, and what is known as "the Interests." When some journalists commenced to carry on a campaign against the "Interests" in Canada, the American settler was led to believe that Canada too is in the grip and power of the Trusts. Hence his feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction. I appeal to journalists to see what can be done to bring about a sterling Canadianism, rather than array the East against the West.

They have grievances in the West, alleged or real. Part of them are with reference to conditions of transportation. We have limited markets. And to some extent we say our taxation is unfair. That involves consideration of matters that would take too long, but let me point out that you must do your very best to aid these Provinces. To-day we have only one funnel for this great bin of ours. I am not speaking of British Columbia. You business men of this city have agreed to be responsible for the way we were dealt with five or six years ago. You were going to give us a line of railway. I think it will be five years at least before the bridge is completed at Quebec and meantime the rails on the Transcontinental in the Eastern Provinces are rusting. Sometimes men, to promote party cries, carry them too far. There should be such a thing as a business administration of transportation. So long as we have only one funnel, you are making a reflection upon yourselves. We had a few routes at our disposal, but you had many. We have lately completed a line from Cochrane to the West, so that our grain may be carried to the sea-board. But if it is carried to an American port the farmer of the West will say, "If you are going to divert my grain to Boston or Portland, why not let me divert it myself here at Calgary and send it to St. Paul or Minneapolis? I want you to answer that; why should I carry it to Cochrane?" Then there is the question of building the Hudson's Bay Railway, and the question of extending our canal system. The men of Ontario have shown a loyal desire to aid in the matters. We have committed ourselves to the extent of \$100,000,000 to the providing of better transportation facilities, largely for the people of the West, I admit, but when the Panama Canal is completed, you want to look to your guns as that it will be of the best possible advantage to the West. If the manufactured products of England can be carried to Vancouver by water route they can easily be placed upon the markets of the West cheaper than you can send them there, unless by keeping down fixed charges, by seeing that the stock is not watered and by the reduction of rates to the lowest absolute figure possible.

On the question of markets I want speak, but that involves the question of reciprocity and you don't want that. I'd like to say something, but a man's usefulness when speaking upon national questions is sometimes destroyed by extreme partyism. I have not said anything in a party sense, but some things I want to touch upon in a broader sense. You cannot hope for the development of new markets in a country that exports more than it produces—to the same value that it produces.

We have the old-fashioned notion that a man's taxation should depend upon his ability to pay the tax. Some of our

farmers say, and properly, that the burden of taxation imposed upon them under the present tariff, is not only greater than their ability to pay, but that it creates conditions under which they cannot continue to live in any comfort. We who live in the West are many of us tremendously interested in the demand for a Commission for the purpose of investigating these matters, so as to build up a scientific tariff. No people are more willing to pay their part towards the development of Canadian resources than are the people of the west. We quite realize that it is impossible to do without revenue, we must have revenue which involves taxation, but there should be a tariff based upon the scientific principle that the price should have some relation to the requirements of the situation. We had hope but "hope deferred maketh the heart sick"—that we would have a proper Commission to build up a scientific tariff, but alas! it is not to be, others have willed that it is not to be, those in the Red Chamber have ruled it otherwise.

I referred to the population from Continental Europe. Do you realize the rotten naturalization laws that we have? Just before an election both parties start out a Commission, a Justice of the Peace, who goes to the Italians and the Austrians and men from other countries of Europe, and puts the vote in his hands. For possession of this the chap says "Me got vote?" At the head of the Great Lakes are twenty-five hundred men, who never heard a word of our history, yet have the franchise. It is said that in Winnipeg there are thousands like that, in Calgary there are twenty-five hundred. You down here in Canadian Club can only undertake this work. Are you going to permit the destiny of Canada to be determined by men who have no love for our traditions, who know not of them, and have none of our reflected aspirations? Or will you create a public opinion by which the people shall become British citizens? We have an Imperial citizenship, that is an accomplished fact; the Government at Westminster will view the conditions of these people, and after five years in Canada a man will be able to get a certificate from the Secretary of State, valid wherever he may go. But it is of the first importance to see to it that the man who exercises the franchise, and holds the balance of power between both parties, is to some degree educated as a Canadian, and not to have conditions so that a public issue may be determined by five hundred Italians or two hundred Austrians or one hundred Galicians. When a man comes and wants to be enrolled as a voter, let the Judge look upon him and let him sign his name at least as a permanent register or record of who he is. The Canadian Clubs can help in this matter of improving our naturalization laws. Let us act so that we shall have done something to advance the interests of our country and to solve its problem.

You men with money, come out and establish some industries in the West. Wealth is a great trust, a responsibility. Do not be so wrapped up in your own business as to forget the larger claims upon you, but do something for your country. Then I say to the journalists, establish a common bond between all the parts of Canada, and thus exercise an influence for good, more than you sometimes exercise. Thousands of men in the West, yes, hundreds of thousands, never saw Montreal, or Toronto, or St. John, or Halifax; they know Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Spokane, but not the cities of Eastern Canada. Let us develop these men's Canadianism, by having them come here and see your factories. You journalists here, we need your influence—for in shaping and moulding the institutions of our country no power is comparable to yours; the influence of a public man sinks into insignificance beside that of the press. So when I see newspapers threatening to boycott Eastern manufacturers, and raising a row, when I see a great newspaper in Western Canada talking about the "Interests" controlling the Government, making the American settler believe that they are throttling him and loading him with an intolerable burden, I say they are making a grave mistake. May I direct your attention to this matter earnestly; I am preaching no insular doctrine, no sectional policy, but rather a broad, grand, splendid Canadianism; so that the young men may grow up to be proud of Canada, and of the Empire of which it forms a part.

I have said something of what your Canadian Clubs should do, and have pointed out how the journalists might exercise a broader sympathy; there is one thing more: it concerns the educationists of Canada. The men who come to us from the Western States do not know our history—there never was a successful battle in 1812, on our side, so far as they have learned! Let us have one history for every Province in the Dominion, and one geography, if possible, stir up public opinion in regard to this matter. I would like every school boy in the West to read "Deeds that Won the Empire," and "Fights for the Flag." (Applause.) These new boys coming to the Western plains—if we are to make these into men and citizens—we must offer to them something that appeals to the imagination, and such an appeal I have been trying to make, in a way which I trust will not be ineffective.

Let us hasten the day when these great nations, members of the British Empire, shall be welded into one splendid, harmonious whole, into a vaster Empire than the world has ever yet seen, and show these people who have come here a greater land than they came from, with greater justice, freedom, and

equality under the law, where every one may worship his own God under his own vine and fig tree. But if these boys are to be seized with a sense of responsibility to contribute to the defence of the nation on sea and land they must understand that when they see our sea-borne commerce it is a burden borne by the British taxpayer who is burdened till he can bear no more. Think of this great North American continent, what a crying shame that we in Canada are not seized with a proper sense of our responsibility and have not done our duty by the Empire!

Of vital importance is the matter of uniformity of the commercial law of the Dominion. We have the same bills of exchange; let us have the same code of commercial law from ocean to ocean—this will do much to solidify and consolidate the Provinces commercially.

I cannot tell you what class of men are going to grow upon these prairies, no man has yet seen the boys grow up there, but I can say that these two Provinces will have men who, born within sight of the snow-capped mountains, cannot be anything less than freedom-loving, liberty-loving men; living where the plains meet the horizon they cannot but be men of broad sympathies and ideas and of profound convictions.

This thought of how environment can influence men, is one of the hobbies upon which I have bestowed some attention. Let me quote some lines of Matthew Arnold's upon this fact of environment:

A wanderer is man from his birth,
 He is born in a ship on the breast of the River of Time.
 Brimming with wonder and joy, he spreads out his arms to the light,
 Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.
 As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been,
 Whether he wakes where the snowy mountains pass,
 Echoing the screams of the eagles, hems in its gorge
 The bed of the newborn, clear-flowing stream.
 Whether he first sees light where the river in gleaming rings
 Sluggishly winds through the plain;
 Whether in sound of the swallowing sea,
 As is the world on the banks, so is the mind of the man;
 Only the thoughts raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Now, my friends, if that be so, think of our responsibility to the generation now growing up, who one day must control the destinies of these two great Provinces, in whose hands, I believe, the destiny of this Dominion of Canada rests; and if the destiny of the Dominion rests with them, then surely the destiny of this great Empire too rests with the men and women that are to be in these great Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. And I can only hope, as I know you hope and believe, and believe with profound conviction, that what these boys and girls see as they pass along the banks of this River of Time will influence them to desire to build there (the

thought was in the mind of that great Chieftain, Sir John A. Macdonald, when he conceived the notion of adding these territories to this Confederation), the finest type of foundation for British dominion upon this continent, and to cultivate the spirit of loyalty to the Crown, and the feeling of oneness with the Mother Land.