

(March 27, 1922.)

## Canadian National Unity and How to Attain it

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*Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen.*—My first word to you, sir, and to the members of the Canadian Club must be one of thanks for your great kindness in inviting me to come to the City of Toronto in the heart of the Province of Ontario to talk to you on a subject which is very dear to my heart, namely Canadian National Unity, and How to Attain it.

I congratulate you, sir, and your executive and I congratulate others who are responsible for the idea of getting men who are interested in public affairs from the Province of Quebec to come here. My sincere wish and hope is that we in the Province of Quebec will take example by what you are doing and that we will get from the leaders of public opinion in the Province of Ontario their true honest and sincere convictions upon all public questions. I am one of those who firmly believe that there is no better way to our solving the great problems that we have to solve, with the diverse elements that go to make up this country, when we think of the point of view of the manufacturers, of the laborers, and of the farmers, of Eastern Canada and Western Canada, when we think of all the national and racial difficulties that have existed heretofore, of all the differences that have been brought about by the question of creed—all of those must make every man, every serious man who is a lover of his country, (and I am sure we all are that, no matter from what province or what section of this country we may come,) feel it his duty to discuss frankly and openly all these questions. After they have been discussed openly, frankly, sincerely and honestly, we have to sit around the table of compromise, have some give-and-take, have consideration of the opinions of others, and with that as our policy, I am one of those who believe that all the questions in this country are capable of solution, if we will only go about it in the right way.

I observe, Mr. Chairman, that in the notice you sent out on calling this meeting, you give me a great deal of credit for some things, and I want to plead not guilty at once and

say that I am free from some of the charges that you have made in your notice. You tell me that I was responsible in part for the result of the elections in the Province of Quebec. If that be true I think you will have to admit that we did our duty pretty well, but I do not plead guilty to that charge. I simply did my duty as I saw it, and the reason for my resigning from the position of Provincial Treasurer in the Taschereau Government in Quebec was because I was called by one of the oldest and biggest constituencies in the city of Montreal and asked to be the standard-bearer of the Liberal party in that election. I then went before the electors and took a position upon the questions that seemed to me should be the paramount issues to be discussed before the Canadian people and which they should consider in arriving at a solution of the public questions of the day.

I first of all preached for economy. I do not think that there is anyone from the Atlantic to the Pacific, no matter what his political faith, that will criticize me for discussing that feature and saying that it was necessary, it was vital, to the interests of Canada that we should do everything possible to put that in practice in public expenditure in order that we could get a balance sheet which we could present with pride to the Canadian people.

The second question I discussed was the question of tariff, and may I say here, Mr. Chairman, that we discussed at the same time the question of the national ownership and operation of railways. On those two issues I took a position that seemed to me the right position. I can assure you that was and is my sincere and honest conviction, but because I preached that doctrine in the City of Montreal and in the Province of Quebec because I believe in that doctrine, it does not follow that I am right and everybody else is wrong. The only point I am making is that it is my belief and I felt it my duty as a public man to tell the people of this country what it was.

I refer to these questions to-day because they are being used as a means of attack not so much on me personally, as on the Province from which I come, in some mysterious belief that we are acting in the interests of Montreal or the Province of Quebec. The position I took on the tariff was very simple. I said that in so far as I was concerned I was in favor of the Laurier-Fielding tariff as operated in this country from 1896 to 1911 with such modifications as might be necessary owing to the altered conditions. That position I took in the fight then; that is my stand to-day, and that because I believe firmly,

I believe honestly, that it is the only policy we can maintain in this country to-day in order to make the great Canadian machinery operate in the interests of all Canada.

Now let me say in this connection that because I took that position upon the tariff I am not less ready to meet my friends from Western Canada as I met them on the floor of the House of Commons last week. I was delighted to hear their representations. I was delighted to hear their arguments. Many of them I had not heard before, but those gentlemen are there with certain ideas on the question of the tariff, and those ideas and those arguments that they presented must be considered by the House of Commons and by the Government.

And that brings me back to where I began, that we have got to co-operate, to meet our western friend with his arguments and endeavor to frame a tariff policy that will be in the interests of the whole Canadian people, and not in the interests of the manufacturer, the farmer, or any other particular class, but a tariff that will be in the interests of the whole Canadian community. If you get a tariff that is in the interests of the whole Canadian community you will be getting a tariff that will be in the interests of Canada and the Canadian public. If you get that you are getting the right policy no matter whether it pleases the manufacturer in its entirety, or whether it pleases the farmer in its entirety, or whether it pleases any other class in its entirety, but you will have a tariff that will operate for the benefit of the whole Canadian people.

Now gentlemen, I have long been opposed to the public ownership and operation of railways. I might tell you frankly that my reason for that is that I have been unable to convince myself that you could ever separate the political end of the operation from the actual end of the operation. I have formed part of Government, and when the day arrives that we can separate the human element from the Government operation of railways, and keep it free from the political machine, then I say we shall have arrived at the time when we can operate our railways and own them for the general good and advantage of Canada. Nobody disputes that if we could do what the advocates of public ownership want; if we could do it as they think that we can do it, then it would be a perfect system. The reasons I have given you, gentlemen, are the reasons why I have taken my position against that. I saw failures in other countries. I have watched from the Quebec Legislature for many years the appeals that have

been going out in connection with the public operation of different things, and invariably I have found that the management was not entirely separated from the municipal, the political, or some influence from a body of men that were responsible to the electorate for their position.

Now, my taking that position, Mr. Chairman, does not mean that I cannot go to the City of Ottawa and, as representing my constituency, tell the people of the House of Commons what my belief is upon this question, nor that since I believe that a majority of the people of this country for the moment are in favor of public ownership and operation of railroads that I am not ready to co-operate with them and give that system a fair trial. And, let me say this, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I want it to be not the kind of a fair trial that we have had since the war closed and since these railroads have been taken over, but I want public ownership to get fair play, fair trial from the beginning to the end, and if we can get that fair trial and if it is a success, I can tell you that in so far as I am concerned I shall be delighted to say to the other man, "You are right, and I was wrong." Is there anything unfair in that position? Could you expect me to come here or go anywhere else and say I was in favor of the public ownership and operation of railways? Do you think that that would be in the interests of Canadian unity and harmony? No. We are descended from a people that have grown strong and great by plain, fearless public speaking, and that is what I ask from all of those in favor of public ownership of railroads. That is what I ask on all public issues. Let them take their position and we will take ours, and I will be satisfied with the verdict that the Canadian nation will give on that issue.

Now my reason for referring to these two issues is simply this, that your chairman or the executive in their card of notice said that I was in part responsible at least for the great Liberal victory in the Province of Quebec. That is not so. The facts are simply these; in the Province of Quebec, I tell you frankly, we have very few men who are in favor of the public ownership and operation of railroads. I can speak for the Province of Quebec, I feel, to-day. I have had the honor of representing the County of Richmond in the Legislature at Quebec for a number of years. The great majority of that county were French-speaking Catholics, who did me the honor of electing me election after election, and notwithstanding the appeals that were made to passion or prejudice, always gave me their complete, entire support.

I went to the Legislature, and there I had the honor to represent the English-speaking protestant minority in the Quebec Government, first of Sir Lomer Gouin and then of the Hon. Mr. Taschereau, and I think I should say that during all my occupancy, although I represented the English-speaking Protestant minority, that I never had the question raised as to our rights, and I always found those gentlemen, not only fair but generous in their treatment of my fellow-citizens of the English tongue and of the Protestant faith.

And in that connection let me point out this; the other day I heard an honorable gentleman from the City of Toronto in the House of Commons say that in the Province of Ontario there were several constituencies that were represented in the House of Commons by Roman Catholic representatives when the constituency in question was in the great majority Protestant. What else would you expect from the great Province of Ontario? What would you expect from any country that is descended from British stock where the constitutional form of Government prevails as it does in England. But, in that connection let me say, that out of eleven English-speaking Protestant representatives who sat in the Legislature with me from the Eastern Townships of Quebec there was only one who was elected in a county where the majority were English-speaking and Protestants. Not only were the majorities very considerably French-speaking and Catholic but I will give you two instances that happened since I have taken part in public affairs which show you the generosity of the treatment of the French-Canadian people.

My father was the mayor of the town of Drummondville in the Province of Quebec for 10 years; elected by acclamation. He is an English-speaking Protestant who could not say 5 words in French. He was mayor, for 10 years in that town, where, in a population of 2,500 you could not count 15 English-speaking families. It was very odd to watch the proceedings at these council meetings, because he had to have it all translated to him by one of the gentlemen who could speak the English language. But I point this out, not that there is due any credit particularly, but because I believe it is the sentiment that prevails in the vast majority of the French Canadians of the Province of Quebec. It is only the few there as it is only the few in any part of the country that make all the noise.

When I first went into the Quebec Legislature I went to the County of Richmond and the first meeting I attended was at Ste. Anne de Beaupré. I had never been there before.

They were holding some kind of a church festival. On my arrival I was a little late and I found seventeen or eighteen members of the clergy there in their robes of office and a gentleman presiding in the center of them. I immediately proceeded to the gentleman in question who I was told was the mayor. Now remember, with one exception, there was not an English-speaking voter in that constituency and only half a dozen Protestants. I went to this gentleman who was evidently the chairman and in my best French told him who I was. He said, "Verry sorry, sir, but you will have to talk to me in English." "Well," I said, "what are you doing here?" "Well," he said, "I am the Mayor." I said, "How long have you been here?" He said, "I have been here six years." "Where are you from?" He was from a well-known county in England. "What is your religion?" "I am an Anglican." "How did you get elected mayor?" He said, "I don't know. They just put me in." So I went to a typical old French Canadian and I said to him, "How do you explain electing this Englishman who is a Protestant, as mayor of this parish?" "Oh," he said, "it was his turn."

Now I tell you sincerely, gentlemen, that has been my experience in the political life of the Province; that the great majority of our French fellow-citizens are ready to co-operate in this spirit, and when I say this I say it to the Province of Ontario just as well as to the English-speaking minority of the Province of Quebec.

Gentlemen, let us look back in political history just a little bit and see if we can find out what the trouble has been in our body political. If you will go back you will remember one fact, that the French Canadians have been here for three centuries. You will remember also that they were deserted, at the time of the conquest, by some of their leaders who returned to France. And if you will go throughout the Province of Quebec to-day you will seldom find a man or a family with any acquaintanceship and few with any trace of relationship with any of the people who are living in France to-day. I believe that the people of French Canada after an occupancy of 300 years on Canadian soil have become, as you said, Mr. Chairman in your opening remarks, one hundred per cent. Canadian, and what more could we ask? When I say one hundred per cent. Canadian, I add to that that I believe that the vast majority, almost the entirety of the French Canadian people, are proud to be British subjects and British citizens and are also grateful for that liberty and freedom that they get under our glorious Un-

ion Jack. Keep that fact in your mind and then think what has caused in the past the difficulties that have existed between the French and English-speaking people of this country. I will not attempt to refer to them all, but you will remember the difficulties between Ontario and Quebec over even so paltry a question as where we would place our parliament; the difficulties in the Riel rebellion and the position taken by our leading politicians; the Jesuit Estates Bill, the many school questions; the famous naval issue of 1909 and 1910; I don't pretend to discuss the rights or the wrongs of any of these issues here. I just want to point out to you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the Canadian Club, that they are, each and every one of them, the kind of issue that allows the politician, the newspaper, or a certain type of public speaker, to use language sometimes for a purpose which I cannot commend. When I talk of political purposes I mean political purposes. When I talk of the press I mean all the press, and when I talk of public speakers I go even as far as the pulpit and I say that if the day could only come when the politicians and the press and the other public speakers, even those in the pulpit, could be prevented from discussing political questions that affect the prejudices and the passions and the national spirit that we are all proud to have in us, then, I say, it would be the dawn of a better day for our beloved Canada. Let me just add this, because I do not want to be misconstrued; that when I discuss the question of clergymen participating in political issues I do not take away from them that right. It is their absolute right as citizens of this country. My only comment is this; that I want them to come and make use of it on the public platforms. I do not want them to do it in their sacred robes of office and from the pulpits that should be kept sacred not only from all political questions, but from questions material in our everyday life. If we could get that we would have made a big step forward. I am free to say that the great majority of the clergy to-day believe, I think, in the policy that I am preaching, but it will be better for Canada if they will all come to that conclusion, and we shall be able to settle our affairs in the open without appeals to passion and prejudice of a religious or racial character such as I have mentioned.

There is one issue which I am going to discuss which possibly some people may say I should not discuss here in the Province of Ontario. I know how the Province of Ontario did everything that they possibly could, were worked up to a heat that was never before seen in this country over the

question of winning the war. I commend you; I congratulate you; I compliment you for that. But there was as a result of that war an issue that was brought about. I am not going to discuss it at length, excepting to say this, that the appeals that were made in the Province of Quebec to the French Canadian electorate at that time and the French Canadian people were made an issue in the conflicts that took place in 1909 and 1910, when a certain proportion of the population were educated that they owed nothing to Britain. Many other things were said. I took part in those campaigns but I say in considering the position of French Canada on that question do not forget that they were educated for years to believe that they owed, certain portions of them, nothing to Britain. And then the conscription issue came. It is gone. On the morrow after the winning of the great war—I say on the morrow; it was very shortly afterwards—I made a tour of the Province of Quebec and on every platform that I spoke from at that time I appealed to the French and English citizens, Canadians, and I asked them to be big, to be generous, and to endeavor to forget the past, and only to look forward. I refused to discuss who was right and who was wrong. That is past history. I appealed to the citizens of Quebec, as I appeal to you gentlemen here to-day, to let bygones be bygones. Let us assume that every man took a position in accordance with his conscience and leave him with his conscience. Let us, if we cannot forget, practice that Christian forgiveness that the good book tells us to, and let us not decide the issue as to who was right and who was wrong. Let us fix our eyes upon the Canadian star and let that star be called Unity, and let us all work for the prosperity and progress of this great Canadian nation.

Now, gentlemen, I could discuss many other causes which seem to me to have led to disunion in this country and I could discuss what I would call remedies, but if you will permit me just to quote the remarks of two of our greatest public men before I take my seat, I believe I will have put before you what my belief is as regards Canadian unity. I am now reading from a speech of the late Sir Wilfred Laurier, and subsequently will read from the remarks of Sir John A. Macdonald. Speaking in Quebec shortly after his nomination as leader of the Liberal party, Sir Wilfred Laurier said,

"It is written that the sands of the seas are numbered. It is written that not a hair falls from a whitened head without the permission and approval of a Providence eternally wise.

Can we not believe that in that supreme battle here on the Plains of Abraham, when the test of arms turned against us, can we not believe that it entered into the decrees of Providence that the two races at that time enemies should henceforth form one nation? Such was the inspiring note of Confederation. Our forefathers were enemies, and waged bloody war against each other for centuries, but we, their descendants, united under the same flag, fight, not their fights, but those of a generous rivalry, to excel each other in trade and industry and science and the arts of peace."

Add to that, just a message of good will by that great French Canadian to the French Canadian people of Quebec, in the heart of the Province of Quebec, in the city of Quebec itself, add to that the declaration by Sir John A. Macdonald, "A British subject I was born; a British subject I will die." Use those as the foundations of our Canadian unity and I have no fear for the future of Canada.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that what we want in this country is co-operation and compromise. What we want is the same spirit of unanimity that Macdonald and Cartier and Brown displayed in building up Confederation. What we want is co-operation between manufacturer and laborer, co-operation between the capitalist and the farmer; between the whole of the Canadian people, with good will from the people of Quebec, to co-operate with us, to put your shoulder to the Canadian chariot with us and let us forget the differences of the past, let us remember that the Allies in endeavoring to win the great victory that came to our arms depended for unity upon a Foch, and those who followed Foch did not ask the nationality or the religion of the man that stood beside him with his gun. With that, sir, on our mind, let us not fall down on the duty that has been left to us by those noble men who lie in the fields of Flanders and gave their lives for the freedom of the world. Let us be equal to the past they have left us, and, united one and all, of this great Canadian people, no matter what the nationality or creed, let us aim for one thing; let us be Canadians first, Canadians last, and Canadians all the time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.