

(February 20)

Some Facts About Quebec.

BY MR. F. D. MONK, M.P.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject, "Some Facts about Quebec," Mr. F. D. Monk, M.P., said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—I desire first of all to thank the Canadian Club most sincerely for this very kind invitation to meet you here to-day. I had for some time almost abandoned the prospect of ever receiving so extremely hospitable and courteous a welcome again in this city as you have given me. Since my entry into public life, I have often visited your hospitable city and I am bound to say that, though I have scoured our broad Dominion far and wide, from no place have I carried away such a deep feeling of cordial and hearty reception as from Toronto and its people.

I thought all this was at an end, I must say, when, about a year ago, I found it to be my duty, upon some public questions of grave import, to take a stand which, at once, in certain quarters, became the object of systematic misrepresentation. There was so very much misrepresentation, and I think, statements that were not correct as to the facts, that I was studying how to get to the West without touching this dangerous point of Toronto. I assure you that your kind invitation to address this Club caused me great satisfaction, as I found that Toronto was not yet quite forbidden ground to me.

I wish to say how pleased I am, as an old politician, to see the magnificent array I witness here to-day. There is nothing so hopeful as the foundation of these Canadian Clubs, which tend to diminish the strength of political passion and party spirit. And I am glad to see here in this Queen City of the West, this city of development, that the Canadian Club has taken so strong a hold.

*Mr. F. D. Monk bore for many years the burden of leading the Quebec wing of the Dominion Conservative party, while that party was overshadowed by the success of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in his native Province. For the past couple of years, Mr. Monk has been working in sympathy and cooperation with Mr. Henri Bourassa, leader of the Nationalists, who are coming to the front with increasing numbers and influence. Mr. Monk speaks both French and English with extreme grace and facility, and personally is possessed of some of the best characteristics of the two races, to both of which he owes his ancestry.

Now I am a busy man, and I know you are busy men, and I know what a short time is allotted to me at such a function as this, where you rest on your oars for a few moments, where you stop for an instant, so to speak, on the dusty march of life, to think and speak of what interests our common country.

How to properly utilize a short after-luncheon speech under such circumstances, has been a problem, and taking all into consideration, fearing that I might think unduly of myself, yet frankly desirous of placing myself right with men whose good opinion I prize greatly, while I would have preferred to choose some subject of academic or general interest, yet the opportunity being afforded me of talking upon some things that are very dear to me, it has occurred to me that a kind of profession of principles—a statement of the political creed or credo, a frank confession—they say that confession is good for the soul—as to the questions which have been so widely discussed of late in my native province, would place myself and my friends of Quebec frankly in your hands, claiming in return in your kind hospitality only that judgment which is allotted to a man who is frank and sincere.

I must say, at the outset, that I belong to a school which is not confined to Quebec, but is disseminated in the various provinces, which not only desires the maintenance of British connection, and the continuance in our country of the authority of the Crown, but looks to an expansion and development of the Empire such as has been but faintly foreshadowed in the past, but without any abridgment whatever of the local autonomy and full measure of self-government which British statesmen adopted as the guiding rule of their colonial policy during the nineteenth century. We do not believe in the new Imperialism as it is enunciated in the doctrines associated with the name of that eminent statesman, the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, a policy which inclines to the restriction of trade in the British possessions. What saved us here in Canada from the consequences of that theory of the European nations was the policy adopted by the great public men during the Victorian era, that of expansion for the colonies, giving the utmost autonomous powers possible.

I believe in the natural evolution of our country, with full and entire freedom of every kind. I view with alarm, whatever may be the grandeur of the plan of the Imperialism of to-day—to differentiate it from the old principle of Imperial connection—anything in its plan that would necessarily place restrictions on our trade. With the enormous resources at our disposal and the opportunity of developing them, we must

pursue the policy of the great statesmen of the Victorian period, that of carrying on trade, as much as possible, with the nations of the world. The conception of still closer union in the Empire is one that is sincere, with no ulterior motive, and is not aiming to unduly develop the manufacturing interest. To my mind, it appears to be evident not only that we have here all the resources required for a manufacturing people, and untold forces here for the manufacturing of the material, but that we have a great agricultural country, and it is our duty as good Canadians to develop these resources.

We—many of us in Quebec, I mean—condemn unreservedly certain shibboleths. One of these is that system of trade which would be confined to the limits of the Empire itself. We believe that we should be able to trade freely with every country with which we can trade safely and profitably, and that by that extension and expansion of this vast inheritance we shall be serving in an indirect way the cause of the Empire itself. It would be a policy full of mistakes to keep the colonies from trading freely.

We condemn too the plans of naval and military concentration which have been lately formulated. The moment we adopt that plan as formulated, that moment we enter into the constitution of the British fleet as part and parcel of it. The moment we adopt the plan of military organization settled upon at the Imperial Defence Conference of 1909 we become necessarily and inevitably responsible for the entire foreign policy of Great Britain, we assume solidarity for that foreign policy, we become responsible and a part and parcel of the foreign diplomacy of the British Government, for those pacts and alliances and treaties of that Government, for its world-wide policy, in a word, in far closer relations than we have ever held before.

Now, under the system of government which prevails in England and throughout the British Empire, it is not the Crown, the sovereign, that regulates these matters, but the British Government. It is a well-admitted maxim, that the King reigns, but does not govern. And that can be said of these important matters. If we went into that system as laid before us, we should assume all these vast responsibilities without having any voice whatever in the control of that foreign development and policy, and thereby be placed in a condition of inferiority to the voter, the elector, of the British Islands himself, who is the one who virtually settles these matters and confers the mandate upon those men who are responsible for these matters. Therefore, we should become

nominally and absolutely responsible for the Empire's policy of foreign affairs, treaties, war and peace, and interchange of relations, and be in a position of inferiority with regard to other British subjects, as we should have no voice in control.

At the Imperial Defence Conference Lord Tweedmouth said: "If you are prepared to assume a portion of the responsibility, we enter into the plan only upon the distinct understanding that you will have a voice in our foreign policy. You will be placed upon the same footing as our own electorate. It would be contrary to all the tenets and principles of the British constitution to ask a man to assume such responsibility without conferring similar rights with the electors upon him. That point was left obscure, and is obscure to-day, but it seems to me that a British subject in these dependencies might be called upon suddenly to assume these responsibilities. You can't read the record of the Imperial Defence Conference and what occurred in that connection without seeing that a radical and sweeping change is suggested, which would at once alter our position, and make us jointly and severally responsible.

A necessary consequence of this, if that change took place, if that new system were adopted, and we assumed that solidarity in Britain's foreign policy, is that it must lead to an Imperial Council. How will you exercise control, or possess that influence, or have that voice here, unless it be through an Imperial Council. And are you prepared to say that is possible of execution?

For my own part, I have studied it out in every shape and form, and read comments written or spoken upon the question, but I am not prepared to say that a satisfactory solution has been arrived at or pointed out. If you have an Imperial Council or what is tantamount to a Parliament, what basis are you going to have, and will there be an apportionment of representation? There has been an embryo scheme mooted in Great Britain, but our representation in that controlling Council would be of an insignificant character. Do you think, with such a representation as that, two or three in over two hundred, this country would be satisfied? Until some such satisfactory scheme is presented and submitted, I fail to see how a Parliament of that kind could receive the confidence of a country such as this, on account of our having enjoyed autonomy and control of our own affairs.

In the matter of defence, those of Quebec, for whom I speak, cling to the traditional policy of Great Britain. In the early eighties the British Government, impressed with the necessity of improving the defence of the Empire,

confided the study of this question to a committee of the Privy Council. On one occasion the Duke of Devonshire, at sittings in London of the Imperial Navy League, and on another occasion, the Duke of Devonshire, when answering a question put by Lord Minto, said that the policy of the Committee of the Privy Council on Naval Defence, which had come to a final conclusion, was that we should provide for the defence of our coasts, and the naval defence of our country; with regard to the supremacy of the seas, and care of the trade routes, the ground was taken by that high and responsible body, that these were the concern of the mother country; but we were not only to provide for the defence of our coasts, but were to provide refuges, harbors, coaling stations, where the vessels of the British naval fleet could obtain refuge. The whole scheme was detailed, and there is, so far as I am aware, no objection to it in this country. We have never refused to carry out the proposal of the British Government by which we were to provide, within the measure of our own resources, for the defence of our own country. When that plan was fully carried out, the British troops were withdrawn. Great Britain had granted a very large and liberal measure of self-government, and in consequence of that we were to provide for our own defence. That was the result of the study of this question by the Imperial Government itself, and by a committee of Ministers chosen in the Cabinet, expert advisers.

I am glad to have this opportunity of giving you an accurate statement of our true position, because we have been so misrepresented, and traduced, and falsely accused, throughout the length and breadth of my native province, because we hold to that position to-day. On account of the absence of voice and representation, and under the peculiar circumstances of this country, it is the old and traditional policy we should adhere to, of providing for our own defence on sea and land. Not that in opposing this scheme we bore any ill-feeling to the mother country, or were desirous of not doing our share, nor that we opposed it from a political or other motive, but we thought that in carrying out these demands the British Government was going far enough.

Viewed in its details, the naval scheme as it is before us to-day has not met with our approval. We do not approve of the cruisers. We do not find a fleet of cruisers used for defence: everybody knows that they are destined to scout the seas, to carry messengers, to harass the enemy, to transport troops, and that is not, in our estimation, what we need first and foremost in this country.

We believe, in our Province, in holding to the principle that the best service we can render to the Empire is to give to this great dependency all the expansion possible, all that is further ordained by Providence for the people of this country. We believe that there is a great deal to do in this country at the present time, a work of development which must tax our resources for a great time to come. We have to expend vast sums in the development of this country. Just at present we have before us immense sacrifices to make if we shall solve, as we should solve, the great problem of transportation. A few years ago, the Government instituted a Commission, which went carefully into the whole question. One of the members of that Commission was a citizen of your city, Mr. Bertram, whom I knew well. That Commission presented a magnificent report, and that report has never been controverted: its conclusions are admitted as correct. It imposed upon us certain works of transportation, if the needs of the country were to be met. It said we would have to expend five hundred million dollars or more on our ports; we must develop our ports and the work must be done at once. And are we not to equip them and make them Canadian national ports? That will cost us at least one hundred million dollars. If we take the ports mentioned by the Commission, and develop them as national ports, we must work out the navigation works suggested, and that means one hundred million dollars. Then we must expend two hundred millions before we finish the present transcontinental road, and when that road and its full equipment, including Quebec bridge, is finished properly, we shall have expended another two hundred millions.

Outside of that which calls for large expenditures, if we are going to bind and unite the different parts of this country together properly to insure what seems very essential, that trade should go east and west instead of north and south, we must be united. I have been many years in politics, and have travelled over this country far and wide, but I have yet to find an instance of any better unifying force than this Club, the first which has set itself to the noble task of creating a union among our people, making us true Canadians. Some think that our Canadian enthusiasm is not fiery enough or strong enough throughout the country. We must provide means of arousing this enthusiasm. We must safeguard our political institutions, and cherish them, we must know them and know how they come; we must cultivate a strong Canadian feeling, and provide for means of education.

This is another tenet of our creed, that we should improve education, not only primary and secondary, but above all things our technical education, so as to enable us, without having recourse to strangers and foreigners, to get the utmost development of our resources. We believe—since my confession must be full—that it is necessary to provide the child with moral and religious teaching. We would imitate the example of England, where in spite of every controversy, they nobly maintain the principle that you can't upbuild the children without giving them these principles without which no nation can be great. We believe in the natural right of a parent to upbringing his child as he sees fit.

Then we believe that we should respect our constitution as the Ark of the Covenant, observing all rights guaranteed under it to all classes of the people. I would say, as Sir John A. Macdonald said, "Whatever our own individual views, we have to come together, to found, from session to session, the great Confederation under the British flag. We have arrived at a constitution, which we must respect, with regard to the minorities as well as the majorities."

I desire to leave Toronto as I have always sought to come to it, having put my views and those of my friends before you in such a way as to win me your respect at any rate. You have read in some newspapers, some in Montreal, and I would say also some in Toronto, an account of the views we have professed during fifty odd meetings held in my native province during the past summer. Is there anything in these views that loyal British subjects can't hold? Do we not live under a free constitution? Has there ever been uttered a word of discontent or complaint? One would suppose, on reading these accounts, that there was an uprising in Quebec, that a lot of the people of Quebec had not entire reason to be satisfied and contented, but under the authority of this free intelligence, under the shadow of that flag, under the protection of the freedom we enjoy, is it not legitimate not only for Quebec but for the different parts of the Dominion to fairly discuss these questions? If some radical change is proposed in the conditions of the great Empire, is it not fit and proper that the questions should be fully and fairly discussed by British subjects the world over? By what right is any school to dogmatize, and stigmatize as disloyal those who do not at once subscribe to its political dogmas?

I want to make two statements, as to the profession which we in my province sincerely make: we are loyal to the British Crown, are happy to live under that Crown, and desire no

change; and we desire that this question of the British Navy be referred to the people, and after full consideration has been given to it, both in and out of Parliament, we know our duty and are prepared to abide by the decision of the majority of the Canadian electorate. Has that any features which friends from other parts of the Dominion find not legitimate and fair? It is possible that in the fire of discussion, in a political election, words may have been uttered that have gone slightly beyond these limits, but of what importance are these matters in the face of authentic, serious declarations by those who have authority to speak for the people at large?

I perceive, gentlemen, that my fears were absolutely ill-founded, and you have been very kind to me. With you, we in Quebec have laid the foundation of the Canadian Confederation; the two old provinces started this scheme, and have carried it out, and it will always be with absolute confidence that we, after all the differences of the past, shall feel free to come to you with sincere utterance of our real thoughts and feelings.