

(January 22, 1907.)

The Nationalist Movement in Quebec.

BY MR. HENRI BOURASSA, M.P.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject, "The Nationalist Movement in Quebec," Mr. Henri Bourassa, M.P., said:—

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I cannot but respond to the kindly and indulgent introduction of the President by saying that probably no other association or club is it such a pleasure to visit, as to come to the Canadian Club and give a synopsis or sketch of the Nationalist movement in Quebec. As your chairman stated, I did not come with any pretended notion of converting all of you. Yet I feel that our coming close together and talking freely for a little while will show us that there is not as much difference between our ideals and aims as, perhaps, we imagined. The cause of much misunderstanding is really not because of great divergence in ideals and principles. It may be chargeable to inaccurate reports as to the aims of our movement as given in the press, the public press, not so much that the press is not loyal to the duty of enlightenment, but perhaps from the difference in the language alone misunderstandings among the best thinking men of both races have arisen.

The Nationalist movement in Quebec is a strong and deeply rooted one, but there is nothing about it to be compared to the Irish Nationalist movement in the Old Country. The circumstances differ. Ours is not a movement based on any grievance against the national status of Canada. We have no hatred or distrust against Great Britain. We have a strong sentiment of love for Canada—not a Platonic love, nor a declamatory love of the pompous, heated spirit of election times. Our creed is that all the resources of Canada shall be developed for the people of Canada, that the representatives of the two great races should devote themselves unitedly to the development of our intellectual, moral and material advantages in the best of real Canadian sentiment.

I may state that the Nationalist movement in Quebec is not the movement of a political party. It is not a Nationalist party in the same sense as there is a Conservative party and a Liberal party. On the contrary, it is an attempt to establish



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a true Canadian patriotic spirit, a deep desire for the complete development of all the material resources and all the intellectual and moral resources that English and French settlement and civilization have rendered available to Canada. I repeat that the Canadian Nationalists are not a political party. I do not disguise the fact that if the Government refuses to adopt a reasonable attitude towards the reasonable desires of Quebec's younger generation, they may choose a proper occasion to give a concrete form to the movement. If, however, the existing parties in power and in opposition listen, instead of stamping the accusation of disloyalty on their movement, then they are satisfied. I can assure you that there is not in this movement any greed for power or office, nor is it as narrowly provincial as is painted. Its creed should constitute the creed of every Canadian. The whole ensemble of the movement rings Canadian. It is based on the only principles by which a true Canadian patriotism can be developed, a thing I venture to say is not now in existence. There is Ontario patriotism, Quebec patriotism, or Western patriotism, each based on the hope that it may swallow up the others, but there is no Canadian patriotism, and we can have no Canadian nation when we have no Canadian patriotism.

The younger men of Quebec take a pride in the belief that the movement should properly start in Quebec—not in a spirit of narrow parochialism. British civilization took birth in Quebec. There were first established the principles of British government. Their forefathers were the first to preach, to work and to fight for the best of British constitutional principles. They saw that it was possible and necessary to create a spirit of friendship and unity between the two races. They were the pioneers of British self-government in America.

The great aim of the Nationalist movement is to encourage the growth of this real patriotism by developing Canada for the general benefit of Canadians. We wish to preserve our birthright, not as Frenchmen, but as Canadians. If I have time I should like to give you a few details as to our programme. It is a well-defined one, on economic, social and political lines. Development along all these lines general to the needs of Canada is the aim. We wish to develop the resources of Canada for the benefit of the Canadian people at large. We aim to keep the straight path between the two great calamities of communism and corporate domination. It may be well for private and corporate interests to take hold and develop the riches of Canada, but not at the expense of the people.

The Nationalist movement is equally opposed to monopolism and to socialism. Such great gifts of nature as our mines and our forests should not be made to yield big profits to the few to the exclusion of others. Some revenue from the mines and forests should, we say, go to the all, the people, to be spent shall we say in colonization, or some other worthy enterprise, the benefit of which the all will share. The interests of the lumber companies should be respected, and also those of the backwoods settler. As far as that part of the programme is concerned, you in Ontario are in advance of us, but we will not be long in following you up. On general principles we favor a reasonable and proper division of the land. We are opposed to the landed aristocracy, which prevents the helpful settling and upbuilding of our country and lets American speculators tie up and hold thousands of our acres.

We are only at the beginning of the era of water power development and electricity industry as yet. We have no conception of its future and its wonderful, its gigantic possibilities. Is this inheritance to be disposed of to corporation or individual? The people should retain their rights in their water powers. Let us study the policy which obtained in Switzerland and France, where the Governments made a classification of the water powers. Again, in this field, outside the party spirit, your Province has taken the lead. But the East will follow.

Go on; run the whole gamut of public utilities. Railways, tramways, telegraphs and telephones. Public utilities should not be left entirely in the hands of private corporations. We take, I submit, the happy medium position between the socialist and the corporation. We admit that at the present time it may be that we cannot undertake to operate every public service, but we should not sell for ever the public heritage of our descendants, who may be able to deal with them in a wiser and happier frame of mind. It may not at present be expedient to adopt complete Governmental ownership, but it is not well that the rights of future generations, who may be able to do so under a wiser and more efficient Federal Government, should be compromised. Let us keep the title of ownership.

We think specially of the railway policy. It may be the most important question before the country. Directly to the south of us lies the most energetic and aggressive railway country in the world, and is there not every danger that a combination of United States capital may secure almost unlimited power in the Dominion by the gradual acquisition of

its railway systems? How can this danger be averted? By at least a modicum of Government control. Canada should reserve the title of the ownership of the lines and allow to a company only the right of temporary operation. The geographical position of our country is such that it can only be preserved as a nation by a vigorous and advanced railway policy.

When I hear people comparing our railway policy to that of England I know that they have not taken thought. England is separated from all foreign countries. We have a frontier of 3,000 miles adjoining the most active railway, industrial and trade nation of the world. Would England be warranted in abandoning the protection of her sea to any foreign country to do it for her? American systems of railways have swallowed up the Mexican systems. Shall they do the same for Canada? Are we not becoming almost entirely at the mercy of American trade because we lack interest in our railway policy? Canada is a geographical absurdity, and it is possible to maintain and fortify Canadian unity only by a vigorous railway policy. Is it proper to leave in the hands of enterprising American companies the power to tap our West? I have no objection to the American interchanging with us, but they should be met by an intelligent railway policy.

I pass on to the tariff. This is a somewhat hard matter to define. The Nationalist idea is, at least in theory, free trade, but in practice this ideal we recognize is not at present attainable. We pretend to be moderate men. We seek a tariff inspired by devotion to the whole people of Canada and their interests, without considering that the whole people of Canada are included in the membership of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. We wish to imbue the minds of the people of Canada with a strong and patriotic feeling. This country is worth while every citizen making some personal sacrifices for the general benefit. We want to be intelligent and practical. We want to act for the general good, whether from the imperial or national standpoint. To me the sentiments of Professor Shortt were false. I do not believe that we should expect the man in the other part of the Empire to make all the sacrifices, even if he is to be compensated with the larger share of the glory. I believe in Canada preserving a dignified self-government, not in exploiting a false feeling of antagonism towards Americans, nor a servile feeling that would have us act at the mercy of our neighbors. Our tariff should be framed to encourage industry. We want no entanglement in

Imperial tariff policy. We are strong enough, and solid enough to stand on our own bottom.

As for Imperial preference, we should look first to the interests of our own land. Trade with Britain should be promoted, but the only trade basis for the Empire must be that on which the Empire has been built up, the basis of individual rights and interests for every colony. There should be no entanglement in any Imperial tariff system which may some day cause Canada's interests to be sacrificed to those of Australia or New Zealand.

Regarding financial legislation, in general, we take the ground that more care should be exercised in the powers given by the State in the incorporation of companies. The seal of the State should not be used to legalize bogus charters to steal from the simple-minded Canadian or foreign investor. Every charter should be investigated and the good faith and capacity of the promoters tested. The Government should ascertain why a concern is to be capitalized at millions, when the promoters have neither the courage nor the wealth to deal in hundreds. Something should be done to put an end to "watered stock" and the obtaining of money under false pretences. The common sense of the nation should prevent financial directors acting on so many boards that they actually forget the names of the companies to which they belong. It should be a criminal offence for a man to belong to more directorates than he can effectually look after. A stock broker should not be permitted to speculate against his client. We want a deeper sense of duty and a deeper sense of honor in those who have the responsibilities of handling the trust of their fellow men.

And this should be extended to public administration generally. There is need for a true and real reform of the civil service of this country. Appointment and promotion should be taken entirely out of the sphere of politics. They should be made according to merit, on the recommendation of competent men, who stand as high as the tribunals of the country. In the judicial system also the same methods should prevail. Judges, though necessarily appointed by the Government, should be designated by some body in no way associated with the party system. The bar should be entrusted with the custody of its honor and held to strict account. The bar should have the choosing of men worthy of becoming magistrates. We believe, too, that appeals should be restricted to Provincial Courts of Appeal which involve only interests Provincial or municipal. That the Privy Council should be called upon only when the interpretation of the constitution of Canada is con-

cerned or involved. Why should we keep such a court busy with our domestic quarrels? We should surely be able to look after these ourselves. It would be, I am sure, more satisfactory to have the offices of the highest tribunal confined to large constitutional cases.

In politics in general we want much reform. We are still in favor of the reform of the Senate. We believe it should exist, and be different in constitution to the House of Commons. But we believe it should be more of the judicial bench of the country than the refuge for political wrecks, or worse, should be a committee of permanent intrigue and organization for financiers for speculation to which they would not dare to give publicity. It is suggested that the Chambers of Commerce, the Universities, the seats of agriculture, should have the designation or election of senators, along the lines of proportionate representation. The Lower House, perhaps naturally under existing conditions, approaches the matter in a narrow party spirit. It might be an improvement to allow the Provincial Governments to make the nominations.

And now for a word as to the immigration policy. We are all anxious to see the country develop and prosper, to welcome the best men of the various countries of the world. But it seems to us that the Government's policy has been directed too much towards securing quantity and not quality of settlers. This policy is unsound and unpatriotic. There should be somewhat radical means of analyzing. There should be an effectual stop to high financing in this matter. Men in high places should not be permitted to "develop" the West in the interest of land deals, in giving over to corporations immense territories to people whose aim is not national but selfish. There should be an end of paying any corporation so much per head for any kind of people they ship us. This is paying the premium to number rather than quality. The best immigration agent is a contented and prosperous settler, who writes home to his relatives. It would be far better for our country if instead of spending money recklessly to bring in everybody, the Government would spend more in preventing those who do come in falling the prey of sharks and speculators in our own land. Less attention has been given to obtaining immigration from the people who are more akin to us, in England and France, than from those in less desirable countries. More money should be spent on the settler's welfare when he arrives, and less on inducing him to leave his old home. It is true that this policy might take a little longer to populate the North-West, but it would be done much better.

And we must not forget that we are now building the permanent future of our nation.

Let us aim to keep the national status of Canada. Let us aim to the absorption of Canadian ideals and habits by the Americans who come to settle among us. We have growing up side by side an Anglo-Saxon civilization and a French-Canadian civilization. The latter are less liable, permit me to say it, to embrace the Americanism than you are yourselves. You have little difference in language, in creed, in habits of living, in social intercourse. Toronto is more American than Quebec or Montreal. You must think seriously as to the future. If you do not cling loyally to the deep roots, the deep traditions of your past, you are in a dangerous position alongside of a country of eighty millions with all their forces of absorption. Let the good people of Toronto consider that point of view. The Nationalist movement in Quebec is the greatest guaranty of the permanency of Canada.

I have already spoken too long. I cannot in the brief time allotted pass over the whole scope of the political and social programme of the Nationalist movement. Does it appeal to the public spirit of Canadianism? It is not sufficient to talk; we must take a part. There can be no real reform if the public spirit does not prompt the movement. We must not be inspired from the party point of view, but from the national point of view. We believe in the party system, but we do not believe in allowing it to degenerate into party slavery. There is work and scope for a strong body of enlightened men who take the broad national patriotic point of view—men who are above the narrowness of mere partyism. It is well there are parties, it is well to have changes—often oftener than we do. There is less danger of corruption and maladministration when there are frequent changes of Government and public opinion makes its influence felt through the press and associations like this. We hope for the day when a strong public opinion will take the place of the party convention.

I trust I have said enough to show that the main object of the movement is to develop the national forces of Canada. Canada must remain a federation of Provinces and races. Unless there is room enough for the whole, there is not room for any. It is too late to make history over again.

Do not be misled as to the position of your French-speaking fellow Canadians in this movement. The French in this country were conquered by England and they have accepted the fact loyally. We must none of us sacrifice our ideals, but we must be broad enough to respect the Federal contract, to

let the same golden rule apply to all Provinces and all minorities. In the much discussed educational legislation we never thought nor asked the Federal Government for special legislation. We had confidence, just as we knew the Protestant minority in our Province would never be troubled. In education we still maintain the British principle that the parents' will is superior to the State's will. There is no danger to British predominance in the two languages. You can never make of us good Englishmen, but you do not have to make us good Canadians. We claim a strong pledge—a pledge given by the Crown of England—and we know it will be respected by all British people. Alongside of the British sentiment we have the growth of the French civilization. That we keep up our traditions and develop them is no danger to the future of Canada. We are independent of the United States, even if we do not read English books and speak like they do in London. We are proud of our inter-Imperial relationship. The object of our movement is national, based on the plan that both races shall exist respecting each other. We have no distrust of Great Britain, but we believe in looking after the interests of Canada first.

We do not wish to impose our views upon you. Should the majority of the people say "Sacrifice your autonomy," well and good. But remember we are the oldest Canadians. We came here and fought the wild beast and hewed out the primitive homes. We have been loyal to the British flag and British institutions. It is due to the French-Canadians to remember that they alone of the thirteen Anglo-Saxon colonies did not raise the flag of rebellion. I say, then, that we have acquired, morally and politically, the right to be heard. Because we oppose the Chamberlain policy we are not disloyal rebels—they have done that in England herself; because we claimed the right to condemn the Boer war we were not more disloyal than Morley, the British statesman, who likewise condemned it; because we opposed the contribution of Canada we were no worse than Sir James Bryce, now receiving special honors and responsibilities from the Imperial Government. We measure to the full stature of British citizenship, freedom of thought, of speech and of action. We believe we have acquired the right to speak as Canadians. By reason of having seceded entirely from European connection we believe ourselves in a position to judge, with a more Canadian view, all those problems. This is not detrimental to the autonomy of Canada. We are Imperialists in the true sense of the word. The principles which have built up the little Isle yonder are

the principles which will build up Canada, and the only principles upon which the Empire shall endure. What was good fifty years ago is still good to-day.

That is the Nationalist policy. You have it briefly as I have given it. You may approve of it, you may condemn part of it, but, at all events, it is founded on true Canadianism by loyal British subjects.