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THE SENATE DEBATES

FIRST SESSION—TENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF THE

HONOURABLE MR. BERNIER

ON

PROVINCE OF ALBERTA AUTONOMY BILL

OTTAWA, FRIDAY, JULY 14, 1905.

Hon. Mr. BERNIER—For five months parliament has been engaged in framing a constitution for two new provinces wishing to become full partners in the confederation. These new provinces are to be carved out of the Territories lying west of Manitoba. Surely this is one of the most important functions of this parliament, and no wonder that the measure now before us has caused here and outside, all through the land, considerable attention and discussion.

Numerous and far-reaching are the problems involved in this proposed action. These new provinces, before very long, will have much to say in the public affairs of the Dominion. Everybody is alive to the rapid settlement of those countries. They will be in the near future, potent factors in politics as well as in the building up of the national wealth. With such a project before our minds our aim must be to give them such a standing in this aggregation of provinces that they be impressed with our wisdom and with our consideration for their present and future wants, so that they may also be desirous of maintaining their partnership with us and their loyalty

to the flag which overshadows our destinies. The prime aspect which confronts us in connection with this measure is the opportunity of creating these new provinces at the present moment. For my part I have no hesitation in saying that their welfare would not have been endangered by postponing this measure for some years. Proper arrangements could have been made by which their present condition could have been improved so as to tide them over without this machinery of provincial life. As a matter of fact, they have at present a political organization which is equivalent to provincial unity. But, at the same time, it cannot be denied that public opinion in the Territories is in favour of this movement. The Territories feel that it is time for them to take their place around the federal board, and have, not only the institutions of a self-governing body, but also the name of provinces in this large Dominion. And under a popular regime such as we have, governments are bound to take notice of public opinion. No fault then, according to my idea, is to be found with the cabinet for bringing in such a measure. This feel-