

Now, Mr. Speaker, I shall not devote any time to the speech of the hon. gentleman from West York (Mr. Wallace). I shall reply to that speech and to that gentleman in the words that Mr. Gladstone used toward a certain noisy member of the House who opposed him when he moved the second reading of the Disabilities Removal Bill in 1891. Mr. Gladstone, pointing at the man, said: I am not surprised, because I have always recognized that gentleman as the prop and pillar of everything that deserved to be overthrown and removed. So I may designate the hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace). He has thought proper to give us a course on comparative religions, contradicting the very words of his opening remarks when he said that this is not the place to discuss religious matters. With these words, and with these words only uttered by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wallace) do I agree. If this were only a question of religion; if this were not a question affecting the rights of all British subjects; if this were not a question based upon the very spirit of British institutions, we would have no business to bring it here.

I fully agree with the right hon. the Prime Minister and with the other hon. gentlemen who have spoken in favour of the resolution when they said that as British subjects we have a right to concern ourselves with everything that is in the interest of the empire at large. On a previous occasion, when I found myself obliged to differ from the almost unanimous opinion of this House on matters of Imperial concern, I clearly stated that every time when I believe that a large portion, or any portion of our fellow-citizens of the empire were affected in their rights, I was in favour of voting in this parliament for an expression of sentiment that might be favourable to that class of our fellow-citizens. But, I go further: I say that as Canadians, as representatives of the Canadian people, as members of the Canadian parliament, this is a matter of direct interest to us. What is the constitution of our country? The constitution of our country is an Act of the British parliament. We cannot touch the slightest portion of the British North America Act without proceeding along the same lines as the mover of this resolution has resorted to. Suppose we wanted to amend the constitution of our Senate, or the power of our executive, or the relations between the provinces and the federal government, the only procedure which we could follow would be to vote an address to the King of England asking the parliament of Great Britain to amend our constitution. Article 9 of the British North America Act says:

The executive government and authority of and over Canada is hereby declared to be continued and vested in the Queen.

So, the King of England is for us not only the King of England, not only the head of

the British Empire, but he is the sovereign of Canada. He forms part of our executive system; he forms as much a part of our constitutional system as does this very House of Commons and the Senate. Therefore, in voting for this resolution I do not vote only on sentimental grounds, I do not vote only as a Roman Catholic; but I vote as one of the representatives of the Canadian people in the Canadian parliament. And I am following the very procedure which the British North America Act obliges me to follow. If in that same capacity, I wished the Imperial parliament to amend our constitution in any other respect. Therefore, finding that the head of our government, that the chief of our Canadian empire is bound by a law which I am sure he detests himself, by a law over which he has no power and over which we have no power to make on the day of his coronation a declaration offensive to the dearest feelings of 19 per cent of the Canadian people, I say that it is our duty to ask, and to ask now, that the British parliament, which is the proper authority to do so, should amend the Act of Settlement and abolish that declaration. At the opening of this new century, in the first year of the reign of Edward VII., in this year when we have gathered together, Catholics as well as Protestants, French Canadians as well as English Canadians, the deplorable loss of that noble and kind-hearted woman who for sixty-four years reigned so gloriously over Canada as well as the empire at large; I say that we are simply doing our duty to the people of Canada and to the King of England in asking that the parliament of Great Britain, which has the sole legislative control in the matter, should free for ever our future kings from making this declaration, and thus enable the sovereign to be considered not only as the king of a certain portion of his subjects, but as the king of all his subjects in this vast empire.

As the Prime Minister said this afternoon, if that declaration is not to be abolished, certainly the Roman Catholic subjects of His Majesty will not be more disloyal to him. But I ask all fair-minded men of this House: Do you think the loyalty of the Roman Catholic Canadians as well as the Roman Catholic British, that loyalty which has proved itself not only on the battlefield, but in every way in which a man can give to his nation and his sovereign the best of his efforts and abilities—do you think that loyalty which has been so staunch and so fully acknowledged by everybody, which cannot now be under the suspicion which dynastic feuds and rivalries of former times might cast upon it—do you think that loyalty should be rewarded by a declaration so offensive that, if it attacked any of the Protestant creeds of this Dominion, I my-