SIR WILFRID LAURIER REVIEWS MANITOBA EXTENSION QUESTION

Up to Provincial Government to Take Action to Meet Proposals Made by Dominion Government to Raified by Parliament—Reply to Attempt to Create Grievance Against the Dominion for Purposes of Provincial Politics.

From Hansard.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier—Mr. Speaker, i the object of my hon. friend who ha just addressed the House (Mr. Alex Haggart), was as he asserted to plea the cause of Manitoba for what h called equal justice with the other pr vinces, I am sure that on reflectio he will agree with me that the metho he has adopted of presenting his cas to the House was not calculated ver effectively to achieve the object h had in mind. My hon. friend know that by the rules of this House a mo tion presented under the circumstance under which this motion is presented that is, as an amendment to go int Supply, cannot be amended, an therefore, cannot be met in all it bearings, and in all its different as I think there are, statements of fac I thin kthere are, statements of fac which are true, and statements of fac which are wrong, if there be conclu sions which can be accepted, and con clusions which cannot be accepted they have all to be accepted in th whole or denied in the whole. M hon. friend, since his sole object, a he says, was to plead the cause o Manitoba, would have been better ir spired if in the early stages of thi session he had brought his motion 'or ward as a notice of motion, whic could have been met in all its bear ings, accepted in part or amended i part, accepted in the whole or reject ed in the whole; whereas, as his mo tion is presented now, it leaves us n option, but to reject it, because ther are parts in it which it would be im possible to accept. I sympathize wit the statement of my hon. friend tha the province of Manitoba has bee anxious for years past to have its ter ritory extended. We can all agre that the territory of Manitoba fro the beginning was altogether too exi guous; we can all agree that it shoul have been extended, which it woul have been easy to have done at tha time, to the north, and to the west Years ago the province of Manitob came to the doors of this House, an the last time it was successful. Tha was in the year 1905, when it submitt a petition to this House, supporte by a delegation from the province o Manitoba, which waited on the gov ernment, including seven members from either side of the House, asking for an extension of its boundaries. Unfortunately for Manitoba at that time, it set up a pretention which encroached on the west, on the pretentions of the province of Saskatche wan, and which encroached on the east on the pretentions and claims of the province of Ontario. The province of Manitoba, in that petition, asked that its boundaries should be extended westward beyond the limit which was then under the jurisdiction of the legislature of the province of Saskatchewan, and that legislature protested, and protested vigorously, against its territory being encroached on, and any portion of its being given to the province of Maanitoba. Later on it also protested against any part of the territory north of the boundary of the province of Manitoba being given to that province. Under these circumstances we thought it advisable—and I think everybody will agree that it was a wise step—that we should have a conference of the three provinces interested—Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario— to discuss the question. That conference took place: if I remember rightly, in the fall o 1906, unfortunately we could come t no agreement. I may state wha took place, because it is a matter o history. The province of Saskatche wan asked that its boundary should be extended north of the present boun dary of Manitoba to the shore of Hud son bay. The Federal government after giving the matter due considera tion, could not come to such conclu sion. We thought that according t the geographical condition of th country the territory north of the pre sent boundary of Manitoba should b given to Manitoba itself. Upon thi ground we set aside the claim of Sask atchewan, and we gave to Manitob what it asked for in that part of th territory. At the same time we coul not agree to extend the territory o Manitoba westward further than it present boundaries. Then we cam to the question of the claim of Man toba eastward was that the boundar toba eastward was that hte boundar of the present province should be ex tended north to the present boundar of Ontario, north of the Albeny rive up to a line drawn from the conflu ence of the Mississipi and Ohi rivers, which would bring the pro vince of Manitoba into the vicinity o Fort William, at the head of Lak Superior. The province of Ontario asked that the present boundaries o Ontario should be extended to th waters of the Churchill river, and tha the Churchill river should be th boundary between Manitoba and On tario. After giving this matter th best consideration we could, and wit no other object than to do substantia justice to all the parties interested—

Mr. Hughes—The hon. the prim minister does not mean that th Churchill river was to be the bound ary between Manitoba and Ontario?

Sir Wilfrid Laurier—I am not i error. My hon. friend may smile, bu he has only to look at the proceeding to see that the claim put forward b Sir James Whitney was that the pro vince of Ontario should be extende westward to the waters of the Churcl ill river, and that the Churchill rive should be the boundary between On tario and Manitoba. We could no agree to this. We thought the pre tensions of the province of Ontario o that point were exaggerated. On th other hand, we thought that the pre tentions of Manitoba were exaggerate also in asking that their boundar should be extended to the vicinity o Lake Superior, and we brought a re solution before the House which is re cited in the resolution my hon. frien has quoted, extending the boundar of the provinces of Manitoba and On tario, the present boundaries at leas forward to the 52nd and 89th degree of longitude on the shores of Hudson Bay.

"The Northern boundary to be the 60th parallel of latitude; the western boundary to be the present eastern boundary line of the province of Saskatchewan to the 60th parallel; the eastern boundary to be the present north-east corner of the province, thence on a straight line to the point where the 89th meridian of west longitude intersects the shore line of Hudson Bay."

This proposed line seemed to meet with the fair judgment of the members of this House and was adopted by the manimous resolution of it. Then the question arose as to how far the territory of Manitoba was to be extended, as it was to be given the administration of a larger area than it had at that time. It was fair and reasonable as we thought that the province of Manitoba should be given for that purpose, for the civil administration of that territory added to its present territory, fair compensation. We were not prepared to say what should be the amount of that compensation, but the resolution went on to say upon this point that the compensation should be determined as follows:

"That whereas notwithstanding the extension of territory above described the ungranted lands of the Crown in the territory to be added to the said province will still continue to be administered by the government of Canada for the purposes of the Dominion; and the said province will not have the public land as a source of revenue.

It is just and equitable to recognize the increased cost of civil government with such an extension of territory will occasion to the province, and in view of the premises, to make to the said province an increased allowance by money payment, the amount of which should be the subject of negotiation between the government of Canada and the government of Manitoba."

This resolution therefore affirms one thing, that for the civil administration of the new territory which was to be given to the province of Manitoba as an extension of Manitoba, and as the public lands in its territories did not belong to the province but to the Dominion, we should give it a money compensation and that this be determined as a principle that amount should be determined by negotiation between the two governments, that is to say the gavernment of the Dominion and the government of Manitoba. This was in the month of February I wrote in these terms to Mr. Roblin, the Premier of Manitoba:

Ottawa, 26th February, 1909.

Dear Mr. Roblin:—

I have the honor to inclose the draft of a Bill for the extension of the boundaries of the province of Manitoba. This Bill is on the line of the resolutions adopted by the House of Commons at the last session. The amount of the allowance to be paid to the province of lands, has been left in blank. According to aforesaid resolution of the House of Commons, this amount should be fixed by negotiations between the Dominion government and the government of the province.

We will be happy to confer with you at any time that may be convenient to yourself and to your government.

Yours respectfully,
WILFRID LAURIER.

The Hon. Mr. Roblin,
Prime Minister's Office,
Winnipeg, Man.

The Bill which was inclosed as a draft Bill was on these lines:

An Act to provide for the increase of the limits of the province of Manitoba.

Whereas a petition has been presented to the House of Commons on behalf of the legislative assembly of the province of Manitoba praying amongst other things, for an extension of the boundaries of that province northward and eastward and for an additional subsidy to the province in lieu of the ownership of public lands in the territory to be added to the province by such extension, and it is expedient to grant the prayer of such petition to the extent and in the maner provided in the enactment hereinafter contained; therefore His Majesty, by and with the advice of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

1 Upon the legislature of the province of Manitoba consenting thereto the limits of the said province shall be increased so that the northern boundaries of the province shall be the 60th parallel of north latitude the western boundary shall be the present eastern boundary of the province of Saskatchewan; the eastern boundary shall be the present eastern boundary of the province to the north east corner thereof, thence in a straight line to the most easterly point of the Island Lake, and thence in a straight line to the point where the 89th meridian of west longitud intersects the shore line of Hudson Bay thence following the said shore line to its intersection with the 60th parallel.

2. And whereas in accordance with the provisions of the Act establishing the province of Manitoba the ungranted lands of the Crown in the territory to be added to the said province will continue to be administered by the government of Canada for the purposes of Canada, and the province will not have such lands as a source of revenue, it is further enacted that there shall be paid by Canada to the province an increased allowance by money payment to an amount to be agreed upon between the government of Canada and the government of the province.

3. The increase of limits hereunder shall take effect upon the date to be fixed by proclamation of the Governor in Council.

Having by the letter which I have just read inclosing this draft Bill to Mr. Roblin, invited a conference between this government and the Dominion government, the conference took place here some time in the spring; because you cannot be unaware further, that this conference was attended on behalf of the government of Manitoba not by Mr. Roblin, who unfortunately was away in poor health, as I understand, but by Mr. Rogers and Mr. Campbell, Mr. Rogers, the Minister of Public Works and Mr. Campbell, the Attorney General. My hon. friend has read a report which was made after the conference by Mr Rogers and Mr. Campbell to their government. I have only this to observe at the present time. A conference took place between the government, represented by myself, and on the first day by my hon. friend the Minister of Finance and on the second day by my hon. friend, the Minister of Agriculture, with the two gentlemen I have just named, Mr. Rogers and Mr Campbell. We separated without effecting anything, but they gave a report of the proceedings of what they conceived to be the proceedings, to their government.

I have only this to observe to my hon. friend on this report: It is customary—and everybody will agree that there is no necessity for defending the practice—when a conference has taken place between two parties that a common report should be made so that, if there is a difference of opinion, that difference of opinion can be settled then and there, and, if it is not possible to agree upon an identical statement, each party can state its own version. I never heard of the report being made by Messrs. Rogers and Campbell until I saw it in print. Perhaps I shall not surprise my hon. friend if I state that Messrs. Rogers and Campbell had told us at the end of the conference that as we had not agreed, each should prepare a report for our respective governments, I would have agreed to that. We might, or we might not have agreed upon the report; we might or we might not have differed upon the facts; but, at all events, I think it would have been only fair, since Messrs. Rogers and Campbell intended to make a report that they should ask us whether we thought it was advisable to make a report of not. In the report made by Messrs. Rogers and Campbell to their government, it was stated that I had offered, as compensation to the government of Manitoba, for administering justice and the civil requirements of that community, the sum of $10,000. When my attention was drawn to this I refused to discuss the statement; I refused to take it seriously. Whatever may be the opinion of my views held by hon. members on the other side, or by hon. members on this side, I think that all will give me credit for some common sense—I should expect that at all events, Messrs. Rogers and Campbell stated in the report, as read by my hon. friend in the House, that they thought this offer was ridiculous. I would agree with them—such an offer would have been ridiculous. I have nothing more to say. The fact is, we never came to any conclusion, no offer was made on one side or the other. After the report had been made, my attention was called to this question by my hon. friend from Marquette (Mr. Roche) who asked me last session if it was our intention to introduce a Bill to limit the limits of Manitoba. To that question I gave the answer read by my hon. friend from Winnipeg (Mr. A. Haggart) that we were not in a position to bring in a Bill until we had agreed upon the financial terms, and no agreement had been reached. Thereupon Mr. Roblin wrote to me on the subject. My hon. friend (Mr. A. Haggart) stated in his opening remarks that he intended to give a complete history of the negotiations on this question, but he has omitted to give this letter of Mr. Roblin's and my answer to it. I think hon. members will agree with me that the history of these negotiations is not complete without that correspondence. Mr Roblin's letter to me was as follows:

Province of Manitoba,
Premier's Office,
Winnipeg, Nov. 19, 1909.

Rt Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, K.C. M. G., First Minister of Canada. Ottawa.

My dear Sir Wilfrid,—My attention was called to the press despatches in the morning papers, reporting your remarks in reply to an inquiry from Dr. Roche, member for Marquette, regarding extension of the boundaries of Manitoba.

I am disposed to think that you are misquoted, as the despatch says as follows:—

On February 26 last, the Prime Minister sent to the government of Manitoba for their consideration a Bill to increase the boundaries of Manitoba as outlined in the said resolution, and until the government and legislature of Manitoba have signified their acceptance of these boundaries, and until the Dominion government and the provincial government shall come to an understanding as to the financial conditions consequent thereon, the government has no authority to introduce any legislation to give effect to the above resolution.

If you are correctly reported, you must have forgotten that representatives from the province consisting of Messrs. Rogers and Campbell waited on you at your request as stated and agreed to the boundary extensions as proposed by your government.

As to the financial consideration, you intimated, according to their report, that $10,000 would be adequate for the additional responsibilities assumed by said extension of boundaries.

Permit me to call to your attention that what we ask for in so far as financial consideration is concerned, is embodied in our memorial of 1908 in which we ask, the area now having been agreed to, for equality in finance with our sister provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Again permit me to say that you also have the memorial from the legislature of 1909, which left here on the 20th of March last, in which we reiterated that we request the same financial terms as those allowed to the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

We cannot accept (and I do not think you could have been serious when you suggested it) $10,000 as compared to what our claims based upon—equally with Saskatchewan and Alberta.

You further say that you cannot take any action until an agreement is reached between the government of Canada and the government of Manitoba. In this you surely are misquoted; because you cannot be unaware of chapter 12 of the Revised Statutes of Manitoba, Vol. I., which reads as follows:—

Further Enlargement.

Section 4. The legislature of Manitoba agrees and consents that the bounds of the province may be increased and enlarged to such an extent as shall be enacted by the parliament of Canada, and on such terms and conditions as to the effect of such increase of territory with regard to an increase of subsidy granted to the said province and with regard to other purposes and subjects as may be provided by the said parliament of Canada:

Provided always that such increase of territory shall not take effect until such terms and conditions have been approved by the legislature of Manitoba.

From this, therefore, you will please note that special provision has been made by the province of Manitoba, enabling the parliament of Canada to enlarge the boundaries upon any terms and conditions that in there wisdom may appear just and proper: with the proviso that it shall not go into effect until it has been approved by the legislature of Manitoba. Therefore, you will see that you are at liberty to pass any Bill with any terms and conditions that you choose, and then it will be for the legislature of this province to decide whether it will be accepted or otherwise.

If you are correctly reported, I would suggest that you correct the statement; because I presume the members from the other provinces who have not studied the question are not familiar with the statute (chapter 12. Consolidated Statutes of Manitoba) which provides for parliament to make any extension of boundaries upon any terms and conditions they choose, subject to the approval of the legislature of the province.

I think it well that the law and the facts should be placed fairly before parliament, and then there can be no ground for complaint from any of the parties to the negotiations.

With assurances of my personal regard, Yours very respectfully,
R. P. ROBLIN.

My reply to this letter was as follows:

Ottawa, 30th November, 1909.

Dear Mr. Roblin,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 19th instant.

I am surprised that you should think that the answer which I gave to the inquiry of Doctor Roche was not correctly transmitted in the press despatches. The report was quite accurate and indeed the existing conditions of things did not admit of any other answer.

You assert that we have sufficient authority to legislate in chapter 12 of the revised statutes of Manitoba, wherein it is enacted that the legislature of Manitoba agree and consents that the bounds of the province may be increased and enlarged to such an extent as shall be enacted by the parliament of Canada, and on such terms and conditions as to the effect of such increase of territory with regard to an increase of subsidy granted to the said province and with regard to other purposes and subjects as may be provided by the said parliament of Canada.

The authority would have been quite sufficient for immediate action to be taken, if your statute had stopped there, but the enactment is mulified by the provision which immediately follows that such increase of territory shall not take effect until terms and conditions have been approved by the legislature of Manitoba.

In other words, you tell us that we may ask parliament to legislate, but you reserve to yourself the right to object to such legislation.

I have only to observe that the above mentioned statute does not give us any power to deal with the question that we had not before, and that does not by a single step advance the solution.

I have further to observe that it cannot be seriously contemplated to ask parliament to enact legislation which would not be final, and which might be thrown aside as unsatisfactory by the province of Manitoba.

Everybody who will dispassionately review the situation must agree that, as I stated in answer to the inquiry of Doctor Roche, we are not in a position to act until the Dominion government and the provincial government have come to an understanding.

In one respect your letter is quite satisfactory. You therein assert that our conference with Messrs. Rogers and Campbell, 'they agreed to the boundary extensions as proposed by us. My colleagues and I had not understood that they had so asserted. We are glad to learn that such indeed was their intention. This point may therefore be now considered as settled.

There remains to agree upon the financial conditions, and we are ready as we have always been to discuss these terms within the lines of the resolution of the House of Commons. As to the report of Messrs. Rogers and Campbell that on this question I intimated that $10,000 would be adequate for the responsibilities assumed in consequence of the extension of your boundaries, I hope I will not be taxed with discourtesy if I do not think the report can have been made seriously.

Believe me, dear Mr. Roblin, Yours sincerely,
(Sgd.) WILFRID LAURIER.

The Hon. R. P. Roblin,
Premier's Office,
Winnipeg, Man.

To this I received the following reply:

Winnipeg, 9th December, 1909.

My Dear Sir Wilfrid:—

I returned this morning from a trip to Toronto and found your favor of the 30th ultimo on my desk. I have read the same very carefully and has been to reply.

I shall not attempt to conceal my astonishment at the position you take in it as well as your understanding of the conference held between yourself and Mr. Fielding, representing the Federal government, and Messrs Rogers and Campoell, representing the government of this province, regarding the extension of the boundaries of Manitoba.

The ministers from this province made an official report of the conference to the executive council under date of April 4, 1909, in which they advised that they had accepted the delimitation of boundaries as proposed by your resolution in the Commons, although satisfied that both in law and equity we were entitled to what the legislature of the province had set out in its memorial.

They further say in said report that you only offered $10,000 as financial consideration for the lands, timber, minerals, etc., covered by such extension. Your intimation that you did not so understand it appears extraordinary to me in view not only of the official report aforementioned but the newspaper announcements made at the time. The Toronto 'Globe' of March 20 contained a statement which appears to me to be an authoritative and inspired one from your point of view. I may say that every other newspaper in Canada that made any reference to the matter, published a similar report.

The 'Globe' article read as follows:

'Ottawa, 19th March—Hon. Robert Rogers and Hon. Colin Campbell, who have been in the capital for the past week to press the claims of Manitoba in connection with the proposed extension of the provincial boundaries, had an interview with Sir Wilfrid Laurier today, who had sufficiently recovered from his illness of last week to again be at his office. The proposed terms of the Dominion government will be to extend boundaries were discussed. In respect to the question of the division of territory in the district of Keewatin between the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba, the Manitoba Ministers stated that they would accept under protest the boundary line as defined by the resolution of last session. It was pointed out by Sir Wilfrid that this allocation of the territory in question had been considered as satisfactory by the Manitoba members last session, and to give Manitoba any greater proportion of the territory to be divided would certainly be resisted by Ontario. With respect, therefore, to the territorial division, the Manitoba government is now willing to abide by the terms of the resolution.

The chief issue now is as to the financial terms, and the Roblin Ministry is evidently holding out for the full measure of the demand made for the additional cash subsidy, similar to that given to Saskatchewan and Alberta, in lieu of the withholding of the Dominion lands in these provinces.

I regret that your recollection of the matter is different from the facts as reported both officially and in the public press at that time. Also permit me to say that your recollection of the financial matters discussed is equally at variance with the published fact and the report made by Messrs Rogers and Campbell to the executive council in April last.

Their statement was that you offered $10,000, which they positively declined to entertain, but pressed for an offer which they could submit as an alternative to the legislature for their demand of equality with Alberta and Saskatchewan. You declined, so they report, to amend your original offer of $10,000 and when they suggested placing Manitoba in the same position as Ontario in relation to public lands you also declined to consider that.

A moment ago I used the words 'authoritative and inspired' for the reason that Messrs. Rogers and Campbell informed me that Senator Jaffray was seated in your secretary's room when they arrived for the conference of the 23rd of March and remained three until the conference was concluded when he immediately entered your office after Messrs. Rogers and Campbell withdrew. The next morning, the 24th, the 'Globe,' owned by the Senator, contained the following, and which agrees absolutely with the official report of Messrs. Rogers and Campbell:

Special despatch to the 'Globe.'

'Ottawa, 23rd March—The Manitoba Ministers, Hon. Messrs. Rogers and Campbell, had another interview with Sir Wilfrid Laurier today, relative to the province's demands for better financial terms in connection with the proposed extension of the provincial boundaries. Sir Wilfrid said the government could not agree to Manitoba's request for an extra cash subsidy similar to that given Alberta and Saskatchewan, and that the bargain made when Manitoba entered confederation with reference to the ownership of the Crown Lands, should not now be revised. Manitoba, Sir Wilfrid maintained, could not, after the lapse of so many years, be considered as being on the same footing as the new provinces just starting in to administer vast territories, with all the incidental expense of organization, to maintain law and order, build roads, etc. But in lieu of granting Manitoba the ownership of the Crown Lands in the territory to be annexed to the provinces, he said the government was willing to allow an annual cash subsidy sufficient to cover the cost of administration of the new territory. At present the enforcement of law and order in the portion of Keewatin to be allocated to Manitoba only costs about $1,500 per year. It is understood the Dominion government is willing to make an annual grant of $10,000 or any reasonable amount necessary to cover all expense to the province in this connection. The Manitoba Ministers are, however, still dissatisfied with the government's terms, and are holding out for the full measure of their demands for an annual cash subsidy as set forth in the memorial presented to the Federal government last year. They are evidently desirous of keeping their grievance for campaign purposes when the Roblin government next appeals to the electors.

In view of the refusal of Manitoba to accept the terms offered by the government, it is practically certain that there will be no Bill brought down this session to extend the provincial boundaries.

Hon. Messrs. Rogers and Campbell left tonight for Winnipeg.

I can understand how in the multitude of cares incident to your office, details such as these could have escaped you; but presume that your mind, freshened with these records, will enable you to recall all the circumstances and facts as they occurred.

However, be that as it may be, the fact remains that we have received nothing that we can submit to the legislature in the way of financial terms. The power and authority to initiate is vested in the commons.

The legislature asked in their memorial for certain area and certain terms; you said 'No' to our area, but moved a resolution outlining certain other boundaries. We have accepted your alternative in boundaries, subject to legislative approval, and ask you to bring a resolution regarding terms, to the Commons on the same authority as you did the one regarding area.

We respectively press for this for the reason that the legislature of this province meets in a few weeks, and I desire in the public interest to submit to it a complete proposition. There is no reason, so far as I know, why you should not do this and thus place the responsibility of accepting or rejecting the proposition on the legislature which is the final arbiter in the matter. You assumed the responsibility for determining the area; I assume you will have no hesitation in taking similar action respecting the financial terms.

I think you will agree with me, the province of Manitoba is suffering from the delay and, therefore, it is in the public interest desirable that a complete, final and satisfactory conclusion be reached not later than the approaching session of the provincial legislature.

In conclusion, allow me to summarize as follows: Manitoba has stated what she desires, both as to area and terms. You have offered us an alternative of area, which was accepted by our delegates; but nothing (I consider $10,000 nothing) as to terms. We respectively ask you to accede to our proposals or make an alternative offer. I shall await your action with considerable anxiety.

With assurances of my personal regards and wishing you the compliments of the season,

Yours very respectively,
(Sgd.) R. P. ROBLIN.

The Right Honourable
Sir Wilfrid Laurier,
Ottawa.

In reply, I wrote to Mr. Roblin as follows:

Ottawa, 27th December, 1909.

Dear Mr. Roblin,—In reply to yours of the 9th instant, I have only to observe that I persist in believing that the report that we offered at a conference with Messrs. Rogers and Campbell $10,000 for the financial terms to be granted to Manitoba, cannot be taken seriously.

You will pardon me if I will not take part in a discussion of the inference which you desire to be drawn from the fact that Senator Jaffray was in my office when Mr. Rogers and Mr. Campbell came to the conference and was still there after the conference was over. The suggestion that there was a breach of confidence somewhere is one which might be averted between honorable men and, moreover, if inference is to be drawn, it might be placed on other shoulders, for if you look at the newspapers at the same date as the 'Globe' you will find that the item was in most of the eastern papers.

You suggest that we bring in a resolution in the House of Commons fixing such financial terms as to us may seem advisable, leaving them to be afterwards accepted or rejected by the legislature of Manitoba. The same suggestion was made by you in your previous communication. I still believe that in my answer I conclusively showed that such a course would be unwise and impracticable.

I have only to add that we are ready to reopen negotiations, with the full assurance on our part that we are anxious to meet Manitoba in a fair and generous spirit.

(Continued on Page Six.)