

House of Commons Debates

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FIRST SESSION—TENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

RT. HON. SIR WILFRID LAURIER, G.C.M.G.,

ON

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTH-WEST

HOUSE OF COMMONS, OTTAWA, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1905

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister) moved for leave to introduce Bill (No. 69) to establish and provide for the government of the province of Alberta. He said: Mr. Speaker, the Bill which I have now the honour to present is for the admission of another member into the Canadian family of provinces. As the House, no doubt, has noticed, this Bill is to be followed immediately by another for the same purpose, in relation to the province of Saskatchewan. These two Bills are intimately connected; they form part of the same subject; and, by your leave, Sir, the explanations which I shall have the honour to give to the House, will apply to both. They will apply likewise to the resolutions which will be introduced as the basis for the financial clauses of these Bills.

It has been observed on the floor of this House, as well as outside of this House, that as the nineteenth century had been the century of the United States, so the twentieth century would be the century of Canada. This opinion has not been deemed extravagant. On this continent and across the waters, it has been accepted as the statement of a truth, beyond controversy. The wonderful development of the United States during the space of scarcely more than one hundred years may well be an incitement to our efforts and our ambition. Yet to the emulation of such an example there may well

be some exception taken; for if it be true that settlement of the western portion of the American union has been marked by almost phenomenal rapidity, it is also true that every other consideration seems to have been sacrificed to this one consideration of rapid growth. Little attention was given, up to the last few years, to the materials which were introduced into the republic; little regard was paid among the new settlers to the observance of the law; and it is not a slander upon our neighbours—for, indeed, the fact is admitted in their current literature—that frontier civilization was with them a byword for lawlessness. We have proceeded upon different methods. We have been satisfied with slower progress. Our institutions in our own Northwest have been developed by gradual stages, so as to ensure at all times among these new communities law and order, and the restraints and safeguards of the highest civilization.

The time has arrived when we are all agreed, I believe, may, I feel sure, upon both sides of the House, that another step, and the last, can now be taken to complete the passage of the Northwest Territories from what was once necessary tutelage, into the fulness of the rights which, under our constitution, appertain to provinces.

I may remind the House, though the fact is well known to every body, that when