

saying in the province of Ontario that the Prime Minister would not act because he was a Frenchman. What is the difference between the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Works on the plane of political action in this respect? It is only that the Prime Minister, as head of the government, ought to be most specially careful how he makes statements such as that, and on all subjects on which he makes a statement, he should be most specially careful when the question is one of either religion or race. What did the Minister of Public Works say in Sherbrooke? He said:

The question to-day is to know whether a French Canadian is as good as an Englishman. I say yes, without fear. The English have had their turn. For the first time we have a French Premier. I think he has no reason to be ashamed of his race. Our English friends are as proud of it as we.

I hope that there are Conservatives among you who hear me, and I beg of you to speak to all the French Canadian Conservatives of Sherbrooke, and ask them why they should wish to drive Sir Wilfrid Laurier out of power. All Canada has its eyes on you. It wants to know if because the government has at its head one of ourselves it does not merit confidence.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Shame.

Mr. FOSTER. Here is the race cry—a pure, unadulterated appeal to the meanest feeling that could be invoked in political life.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Shame.

Mr. FOSTER. And the hon. gentleman repeated that idea, not once nor twice, but over and over again. Now, Sir, the issue in Sherbrooke was as to whether the policy of this government ought to be upheld by the people. It was as to whether the party which had left its pledges unfulfilled, to the detriment of the people of the country, ought to be rejected or not at the polls? There was no question as to whether we should put one man out and another in simply because he was of French or English or Irish extraction. Mr. Speaker, in this country of ours, composite as it is and necessarily must be, the great lesson that we cannot learn too soon is that, despite all the lines of difference which must necessarily mark people of different races and creeds and religions, arising from inherent, constitutional reasons, from associations and environments, acting for hundreds of years, from modes and habits of thought which have grown up essentially different on the principles on which they are founded amongst different civilizations and different nationalities—aside from those rifts and differences which must exist in this country to a large extent, and which it is impossible to eradicate—I say that outside of those, it is a lesson that we cannot learn too soon and inculcate too widely, that we must be charitable to each other's point of view, and endeavour to discover the excellencies

in each rather than the deficiencies. Your Englishman, Irishman and Scotchman—each has his faults. And so has your Frenchman. But every nationality has its excellencies, and we would have a hard time getting along in this world if we were simply to look at the faults and exaggerate them, and not give due credit to the excellencies. It is impossible absolutely to prevent in political life some little coming to the surface of this friction of race and creed in this country. But if ministers of the Crown drag in these causes of friction by the heels at every opportunity and accentuate them, if from their high and leading position they inflame those prejudices, what is to become of the unity of this country, and the harmony between its two dominant races? I am not here as sponsor for the French people, but I believe that this is absolutely true, that if you were to take the vote of the French people in this country to-day, if you were to give them the absolute and speedy choice of transferring themselves to a colonial position under the colonial administration of France as it is to-day, or remain as they are now, there is not an intelligent Frenchman in the Dominion who would make the transfer.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. FOSTER. I think that is a statement which cannot be controverted. I believe that is a truth upon which we can build up a people in a fair and good working union. I believe it is something which stands like the ages and will always stand. Before I came to this parliament, I had very little commerce with French Canadians of any class. But since I have come to this parliament I have become acquainted with the French people, I have mingled with them as colleagues and honourable opponents, and I know them better and appreciate them more than when I knew comparatively nothing of them. All the attrition of commerce, social intercourse and political intercourse, superadded to that principle I spoke of before, will make of us, not a people who will all have the same language and religion, but a people of two languages and origins, each, however, good citizens and vying with each other in furthering the progress of this country. I commend to the Minister of Public Works that he should change his course in this particular, and that it is not seemly that a member of the cabinet should enkindle the inflammable prejudices and feelings of people, whether they be English or French, for all people have their feelings and prejudices; that it is better for us, from this day forward, to act on the assumption that every man is a good citizen of this country, and to cultivate that feeling until every man feels that he must aspire to be a good citizen, for we live here, English and French and Irish and Scotch, all together under the flag of the country which has been a