

House of Commons Debates

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SPEECH

OF

MR. A. E. KEMP, M.P.

ON

Provincial Government in the Northwest

OTTAWA, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 1915.

Mr. A. E. KEMP (East Toronto). Mr. Speaker, in continuing this debate I feel somewhat relieved when I realize that I am not a member of the legal profession, and therefore I shall not be expected to give any legal opinion in respect to the constitutional aspect of this question relating to the autonomy of the Northwest Territories. I intend to deal more particularly, and briefly, with that portion of this Bill having reference to educational matters; and the stand which I intend to take is that there is no practical difference between the original clause dealing with the educational question and the amendment thereto, of which notice has been given in this House; that, in substance and in principle, they are practically the same. I say that I do not intend to deal with the constitutional aspect of these clauses, because I intend to rest my position upon the argument put forward in this House by the leader of the opposition, a gentleman in whom, I think, we all have confidence, and especially do we have confidence in his legal opinions; therefore, I feel satisfied to rest my case in respect to this feature of the Bill upon his judgment. Sir, my premises will be that this parliament is not called upon to make what I believe to be an amendment to the constitution by forcing these educational clauses upon these provinces, and in that respect creating a constitution for them. I say that this parliament is not called upon to legislate in this manner, and that it is pursuing an unconstitutional course in doing so.

In discussing this Bill, many questions have been introduced which have no bearing upon the issues before us. The Quebec situ-

ation has been more than once, more than twice, more than a hundred times, referred to and dwelt upon by members of this House, sometimes in order, and sometimes out of order, I think. In dealing briefly with this matter, I would refer in passing to the speech of the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa), a speech which I could not but regard as inflammatory and as one which does not correctly represent the views of the people whose cause the hon. gentleman professed to champion. I do not find in the speech of the hon. member for Labelle one generous word with respect to those who differ with him on this question: I cannot discover that he exercised any restraint in the sentiments he put forth, though they differed very much from the sentiments of a majority of his colleagues from the province of Quebec. While he was speaking, I felt that the cause of those on whose behalf he spoke was not safe in his hands. His course was a heedless course, an extreme course, and one which I am certain will be barren of good results. In discussing this question both the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) and the Solicitor General (Mr. Lemieux) referred to events in this country over a hundred years ago, they referred to what happened in the year 1774 and also in 1812. I am not referring to this matter for the purpose of criticising the utterances of those hon. gentlemen, but for the purpose of agreeing with a great deal of what they said. I do not see, however, that this part of the speeches of those hon. gentlemen had any bearing upon the issues now before us. My only reason for referring to the matter at