

House of Commons Debates

FIRST SESSION—NINTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

HENRI BOURASSA M.P.

ON

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR CANADIAN INTERVENTION, &c.

OTTAWA, TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 1901

SUPPLY—S. A. WAR—CANADIAN INTERVENTION, &c.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Hon. W. S. Fielding) moved that the House go into Committee of Supply.

Mr. HENRI BOURASSA (Labelle). Since I have given notice of the motion which I am now to propose, a double accusation has been brought against me.

On one hand, I am pointed out to the eyes of my English-speaking fellow-citizens as a French demagogue; and, on the other, I am denounced to my own countrymen as a dangerous British Imperialist.

Of course, having made up my mind to say what I think, as I think it, on all matters of national importance, I will not bother myself with the opinion of this paper or that one: it would be easier to get a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to bring a political sheet to appreciate an idea with complete independence and good faith.

In the course of my remarks, I will have occasion to deal with the charge of French demagoguery, to which, I must say, I never

attached any importance. The intention of raising a racial agitation on this matter has always been so foreign to my mind and so totally absent from my utterances, that I never took the trouble to confute that accusation. I thought I could rely on the common sense and straightforwardness of English Canadians to do justice on that slander.

As to my imperialistic tendencies, they should not call for much argument either. Nevertheless, the problem has received so little serious consideration, from the Quebec representatives especially, that some explanation may be required. The preamble of my motion sets out my intention clearly enough, I think. I do not recede for one moment from the position which I have taken and kept from the day the Canadian government decided to take part in the South African war; that position being identical to that occupied by the cabinet till the 13th October, 1899.

This proposition therefore does not imply an admission on my part that the government had a right and a duty to interfere in