

House of Commons Debates

FIRST SESSION—NINTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

HENRI BOURASSA, M. P.

ON

THE CORONATION OATH

OTTAWA, FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 1901

Mr. HENRI BOURASSA (Labelle). Mr. Speaker, It is not my intention to offer any lengthened remarks upon this subject; but the speech, well intentioned, I am sure, that we have listened to from the hon. member for Lanark (Mr. Haggart) proves that this subject has not received from himself and from the members of this House, the attention as to the facts that it should have received after the notice that has been given of it by the hon. member for Victoria, N.B. (Mr. Costigan). In fact, I may safely say that up to the last few days, when it was known through the press that this subject was to be taken up by the parliament of Canada, most of the people who knew anything at all about the subject thought that the coronation oath and the declaration that we have objection to were one and the same thing. The hon. member for Lanark has based his argument on a point which, I think, from his point of view, from the point of view of the majority of the British people and from the point of view of a large majority of the citizens of the empire, is a right one. It is that the sovereign of England should be a Protestant. As far as that is concerned, there is no Roman Catholic sitting in this House who is urging any difference of opinion on the matter. Had the hon. gentleman had time to study the subject, he would see that there is nothing in the Bill of Rights and that there is less in the present declaration to force the British King to be a Protestant. No Roman Catholic or Greek schismatic could take that

declaration; but outside of these, any man belonging to any faith or creed which does not believe in transubstantiation or in prayers to the saints and the Holy Virgin could take it; and, therefore, the object that the hon. gentleman has in view, that of guaranteeing to the people of England that their King shall be a Protestant, is not at all covered by this declaration. A Pagan or a Buddhist could take it; in fact, any man but a Roman Catholic or a Greek schismatic could take it. It is not a declaration of Protestantism; it is simply an anti-Catholic declaration; and if to-day we are asking the parliament of Canada to urge the British parliament to repeal that declaration, it is not because it is a Protestant declaration. No, Sir, we are not asking for anything to be taken from the rights or privileges that belong to our Protestant fellow-citizens; we are asking that a useless, obsolete, anti-Catholic declaration should not be imposed upon the British King at a moment when his accession to the Throne should be synonymous with peace, liberty, freedom and equal rights to all of his loyal subjects, who are ready to uphold him in keeping this empire up to the glorious state that it has attained. The hon. gentleman has spoken about the coronation oath which is not at all affected by this motion, and to which we have no objection at all. He has stated that a Roman Catholic could take the coronation oath. No, Sir, he could not; because the King of England, by that oath, is obliged to declare that he will uphold the