

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 4, 1873

The SPEAKER took the chair at 3 p.m.

Prayers

Mr. KIRKPATRICK presented the report of the Quebec Centre Committee, which had decided that the Hon. Mr. Cauchon was duly elected.

* * *

THE ADDRESS

Hon. Mr. BLAKE resumed the debate on the Address. He said that last night he pointed out that a great number of the topics introduced by the First Minister of the Crown were wholly irrelevant to the serious question engaging our attention. The House and the hon. gentleman know it is not my custom to shrink from a fair discussion of any public question at any time, or at any place, or before audiences from any of the Provinces whom the hon. gentleman seeks to array against me, and whose champion the hon. gentleman assumed to be last night. I am perfectly prepared to vindicate, and I believe satisfactorily to establish, the motives by which I was actuated in consenting to the policy which my friends have pursued on public questions to which he had referred.

But, Sir, it is not fit that we should interfere with this discussion by these considerations, and I feel myself at a loss in the discussion of the electoral campaign, because it is known I was not present at the campaign. I was surprised to learn the course the campaign took, according to the view of the hon. gentleman opposite. All I can say is that from the information I received, I am led to believe the First Minister's recollection is inaccurate as to the points agitated in the west, and I believe if anything was said in Nova Scotia, that it was an attack upon my hon. friend for giving that Province too much for her Provincial Building.

Now, the conduct of the Government in the past has no more to do with protecting them against this charge than their misdeeds, if they have been guilty of any, should have an ill effect. In establishing the charges against them, it is to be remembered that the charge is one of breach of high public trust. You must not forget that charges of this description can only be maintained against persons who have borne very good characters. It is against persons obtaining positions of trust, who having, as they allege, assuming their arguments to be correct, obtained through their policy a position which they might use improperly, they put forward their

previous good conduct in defence of their improprieties. The embezzlement by a confidential clerk, or the betrayal of a trust by a bribe, could not be condoned by previous good conduct. At criminal trials witnesses are called to test the good character of the criminal, but they are merely called to mitigate the sentence; but upon this question the verdict of this House is asked, guilty or not guilty of the charges, and of conduct which merits the severe censure of this House. Upon that issue good conduct was immaterial. It was material in one sense, because it involved a confession of guilt by appealing to these mitigating circumstances.

So far from the Opposition being actuated by any sectional feeling, as has been alleged against us in regard to our policy respecting the different Provinces, I believe it can be demonstrated that fair play on our part of this Dominion has been the groundwork of our policy in the past and will be the groundwork of our policy in the future. He is the true sectionalist who seeks to array Province against Province. Let it not be said that in this House any member, come from what Province he may, is not to be free to argue questions of public policy.

Now I return to those matters which are more or less touched by the matter before the House. In the first place, the hon. gentleman argued that the motion of the member for Shefford, was a motion of want of confidence. He did not think that was very material, but the proofs in this matter were threefold; first of all the hon. gentleman read a statement from the Ottawa correspondence of *The Globe*, and he announced that the great party, which my hon. friend leads, was irrevocably bound, because *The Globe* correspondent said, before it was known what the motion would be, that it was expected it would be a motion of want of confidence. That argument is so absurd that the mere statement of it is its sufficient answer.

Then the hon. gentleman turned to the member for Wentworth South (Mr. Rymal). My hon. friend did say his opinion was that the motion was intended as a motion of want of confidence. I did not so understand it, and I do not understand that my hon. friend set up his views as binding upon the whole party. Lastly, the hon. gentleman said the mode of making the motion indicated it to be a motion of want of confidence, namely, by amendment to a motion to go into Committee of Supply. That is not correct in point of Parliamentary law, and there are to be found two notable instances of the same, contradicting the hon. gentleman's theory, in which amendments to go into Committee of Supply were carried, and were not treated as motion of want of confidence.

Well, Sir, what were the reasons on the other hand? The nature of the motion itself is one which prevented it from being called properly a motion of want of confidence. A motion for enquiry is