

NON-CONTENTS :

Hon. Messieurs

Abbott,	McKay,
Almon,	Macdonald (Victoria),
Boulton,	Merner,
Clemow,	Miller,
Dever,	Montgomery,
Dickey,	Murphy,
Girard,	Pâquet,
Glasier,	Prowse,
Haythorne,	Read (Quinté)
Kaulbach,	Resor,
Lewin,	Reid (Cariboo),
McCallum,	Robitaille,
McInnes (B.C.),	Smith.—26.

HON. MR. ABBOTT moved that the House do now adjourn.

HON. MR. HOWLAN—Before the House adjourns I want to show that there is a precedent for the course which the Debates Committee have taken in this matter. On reference to the first volume of the Senate Debates, Session of 1885, it will be seen that a similar question to this was before the House. Mr. Vidal then occupied the position of chairman of the Debates Committee. I find on page 239 the following:—

“HON. MR. ALEXANDER—Before the Orders of the Day are called, I rise to a question of privilege. I learn that orders have been given to the reporters of this House to expunge a certain speech delivered in this House by a member. The orders were conveyed I understand, to the reporters by the hon. senator from Sarnia (Mr. Vidal). I desire to ask by what authority that senator gave or conveyed such orders? My reading of parliamentary practice is that no speech of any member can be omitted from the official report of the debates without an order of the House conveyed by resolution duly passed.

“HON. MR. VIDAL—As the hon. member has called upon me by name to explain this matter, I must endeavor to do so, although laboring under very considerable difficulty on account of a severe cold. As he has been pleased to term it, the order that has been given the reporters is not, correctly called, an order. I received from the official reporters, in the absence of the chairman of the committee on the reporting of the debates, a brief memorandum asking what was to be done with the debate of Friday last in connection with the disorderly conduct and remarks of the hon. senator from Woodstock. The reporters understood, as I think it was generally understood in the House, that his remarks and the speeches referring to those remarks, should not find a place in the record of the Debates of this House. That was the understanding by myself, and I think by the other senators, of what was the desire and intention of the House in this matter. I have no authority to suppress any debate, much less to do what has been incorrectly charged to have been done—expunge it from the record, because it has never been on the record, and consequently could not have been expunged. I had no authority for directing that this speech should not be placed in the record; and I therefore took the opportunity of consulting other members of the Debates Committee. There was no time to call the committee together, but I took the opportunity of consulting such members as I could conveniently see. Every one of them understood the sense of the House that those speeches—not merely

the speech of the hon. member from Woodstock, but all the speeches based upon his remarks—should not be inserted in the official report of the debates. I conveyed this information to the reporters, and they very naturally asked the question as to where the omission was to commence and how far it was to extend? I gave to them what I understood to be the decision of the Senate, and as I thought a very natural and very proper decision, especially when the hon. gentleman from Woodstock had professed to make an apology to the House, I considered, that being the case, that was the admission that he had done wrong, that his remarks were entirely out of order and should not, therefore, on that account be placed on record; so I gave, as I thought, very simple and proper instructions to the reporters to go on with the hon. gentleman's remarks just so long as he was speaking on the subject before the House—that is, the Bill respecting the transfer of lands in the North-West Territories—but so soon as he departed from that and began to use these inexcusable imputations, and when he undertook to express himself in a manner entirely unbecoming in a member of this honorable body, that those remarks should not appear—that that should be the special point at which the reporters should not record the debate, and as a natural consequence, not only the remarks of the hon. gentleman from Woodstock, but the remarks of the hon. gentlemen who spoke after him in reference to this matter, should disappear altogether, so that there should be no record in our official report of that very unpleasant debate. I think the hon. gentleman's remarks were very derogatory to the character and honor of this House, and calculated to lower us very much in the estimation of the country. There is no hon. gentleman who professes to have greater respect for the dignity of this body or greater desire that it should stand well in the eyes of the community than the hon. member from Woodstock, and I venture to say that the remarks such as he had made in this House during this session have done more to lower it in public estimation than anything that has been done within these walls. Not only should the Senate sanction what has been done, perhaps somewhat irregularly, with reference to these remarks, but in my judgment the Senate would act wisely and well if they would expunge from the record the remarks made by the hon. gentleman on a former occasion, when he indulged in unjustifiable imputations upon the character, honesty and integrity of this body. I trust the House will sustain the somewhat irregular action taken by me, and will affirm the principles and motives which actuated me in adopting the course which I have taken.”

Now, we did not go so far as that: we merely recommended to the House what we thought would be in the interest of the Senate, and still we are accused of robbing hon. gentlemen of their rights, and as the hon. member for Halifax has well put it, of tumbling down the whole British constitution on their heads. On the occasion in 1885 to which I have just referred the House supported the chairman of the Debates Committee in the course he pursued. Taking that view of the matter, I ask the leader of the House to be allowed to withdraw my name from the Debates Committee.

The motion was agreed to; and the Senate adjourned at 5:10 p.m.