

House of Commons Debates

SIXTH SESSION—SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

SIR ADOLPHE CARON, M.P.

ON THE

REMEDIAL BILL

OTTAWA, WEDNESDAY, 4TH MARCH, 1896.

Sir ADOLPHE CARON. Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat unfortunate last night, after the leader of the Opposition took his seat, in not catching your eye. The hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace) rose in my stead, and spoke in my stead; but, Sir, I can say that that hon. gentleman did not make the speech which I wished to make yesterday, and which I shall try to make to-day. Since I have been in public life I have endeavoured to consider all questions such as the present one, independent of any consideration of race, of any consideration of nationality, of any consideration of province. I must say at the outset that I deplore that a question such as this should have come before the Parliament of Canada. I deplore it because, among some of the people of our country, it has created division and it has created irritation, which are never favourable to the political health of any country. But, Sir, I believe that at all hazards the constitution must be maintained, and it is from that point of view that I desire to consider this question. In my own native province, upon questions like the present one, and occasions now historic, I have had to face fierce fights, but there again, without considering whether these questions affected me prejudicially as a public man, not considering whether the sentiments of my people were enlisted in defence of the view which I had taken, I treated those questions as matters affecting not one nationality, not one province, but I considered them from the broad standpoint of the general interests of the Dominion. Now, Mr. Speaker, I look upon this question as a purely constitutional one. Although I know that religious views and ideas are involved in it more or less, I want to consider

it in this Parliament, the national assembly of the Dominion, peopled by the representatives of so many different races—I say that on the floor of this Parliament, this question should be viewed from the constitutional standpoint, and in the light of the general interests of all our people. In the interest of the country, in the interest of the party which is concerned, it is better that it should be tried as a constitutional question, separated as much as possible from the irritating elements which unfortunately accompany it. Sir, as I view the question, it resolves itself into this: The highest tribunal in the Empire has declared that rights have been taken away from a minority; and that minority, under the laws which govern this country, the constitution under which this country began its career has appealed to the highest tribunal in the British Empire; and that tribunal, outside our strife, ignoring all questions of nationality or of province, viewing it as that tribunal does all great questions coming from every portion of the vast Empire to be submitted to its impartial judgment the judges of that high tribunal, the last tribunal to which a British subject can appeal, declared that rights had been taken away from the minority of Manitoba. Sir, I shall have occasion to refer later to the circumstances under which a clause for the protection of minorities, happens to be in the British North America Act; and under that clause I say it became the imperative duty of the Government, under the judgment rendered by the Privy Council, to hear the appeal of that minority, coming before them for redress. Now, this appeal having been heard, the Government of Canada proceeded to apply the remedy which the constitution afforded to the minority. Sir, hon. gentle-