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Manitoba Free Press  
 Thurs. Nov. 9/22

Natural Resources

### Bourassa Suggests a "Hold Up"

In a lengthy article in the *Devoir* on the western resources question, Henri Bourassa displays entire ignorance of the grounds on which the Prairie Provinces base their claim. He fails, at any rate, to deal with the arguments now presented by these provinces in support of their claim, he sweepingly denies that they have any legal or moral right to what they are demanding, and, finally, he sees in the coming negotiations at Ottawa only an opportunity for the Quebec members of the government to compel the Prairie Provinces to agree, as a consideration for the settlement of the resources question, that they will make concessions in favor of the French Canadians in these provinces in regard to the schools. Because the older provinces have always possessed their natural resources, says Mr. Bourassa, is no just reason why the western provinces should claim to be put in the same position. There is no necessity for "uniformity," he declares, as if the West wants uniformity only for the sake of appearances. If he thought that Quebec was not receiving some advantage which all the other provinces were receiving he would be the first to demand "uniformity" in the matter. Then he tells the western people that they have been sharing, along with the taxpayers of the other provinces, in the profits obtained by the Dominion "from the natural riches of the country." The trouble is that western people are obtaining no benefit whatever from the "natural riches" of the older provinces, while the people of the latter are obtaining a benefit from western resources. Mr. Bourassa argues himself into believing that this is all right.

Since the Dominion has always possessed the natural resources of the western provinces the latter have no right of any kind to demand possession of them, he argues, entirely ignoring the fact that when the Dominion retained the resources of the Prairie Provinces it acted contrary to the established practice all over the British Dominions when a self-governing province or state was set up. And he also ignores the fact that the western provinces are seriously handicapped because of the course which the Dominion government has followed. He tells us once more of "tremendous sacrifices" made by the East for the development of the West. He might have added that the East had a very great interest of its own in the settlement of the West. The talk of "sacrifice" as if it were purely or largely for the benefit of the West is all bunkum.

If the Quebec members of the Government were to view the resources question in the way Mr. Bourassa does, and especially if they were to accept his suggestion to use it as a lever to gain some advantage for French Canadians in regard to the schools, it would be useless for the western premiers to proceed to Ottawa for the pending conference. Fortunately, there is reason to believe that such extreme views will not be advanced by members of the government, though they may be heard in the debate in parliament. The western provinces are depending solely on the result of a fair and reasonable consideration of the case as their representatives will present it.

RICHELIEU PAPERS, Series 2 (N.G. 26, I, Volume 116)

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