

House of Commons Debates

THIRD SESSION—EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

J. H. N. BOURASSA, M.P.

ON THE

MANITOBA SCHOOL QUESTION

OTTAWA, THURSDAY, 12TH MAY, 1898

Mr. BOURASSA. Mr. Speaker, I feel confident that all the members on this side of the House and most of the members on the other side had hoped that this third session of the present Parliament would have passed without having forced upon us a discussion of this kind; without having obliged us to listen once more to the passionate appeals to racial and religious prejudices such as we have heard in this debate. I have always been of the opinion that this was not the place to discuss religious matters. And I have always thought, as a citizen of the province of Quebec, and as a true friend, I trust, to the minority in Manitoba, that many of the discussions that were heard during the last Parliament should never have taken place. In this I do not wish to speak for only one side of politics. I hope this is the last time that this question will come before us as a political question. We have heard the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron), the supposed leader of the province of Quebec on the Conservative side. But, unfortunately, his intention expressed in the end of his second, or, we may say, his third speech, is not at all in accord with the beginning of his speech, and therefore I find only one explanation of all his speeches, and of the position he has taken yesterday and today; it is, that not finding any sufficient grounds for opposing this Government on business questions, or even on this very school question, he has decided to continue

the policy of passionate appeals to prejudice, for which appeals there is no foundation. The Conservative party, in the course of its history, has very often resorted to such appeals. I do not, in speaking thus, include all the membership of the Conservative party, because I know that there were and are still men in that party who do not like that kind of appeal, or the policy that dictates them. Generally, when appeals of this kind were made, there were members of the Conservatives of Quebec wing who rode the Catholic horse, and members of the Ontario wing who rode the Protestant horse. The hon. member for Beauharnois has thought proper to ride both horses at the same time. I acknowledge that the hon. member has many of the qualities of a political clown, though he has not many qualities to assure him any other position in the political arena. But this time he has failed even in that. I suppose he was afraid that his friend and colleague the hon. member for West York would forget to ride the Protestant horse, and he would show him some movements of that animal to be practiced next time in Ontario. If anything is to be gathered from the long speech, divided into three parts, of the hon. member for Beauharnois, it was that the Liberal party has deceived the Catholic electorate of the Dominion, that they had deceived the Protestant electorate of the Dominion and that they had deceived the Pope. I do not think it is necessary to argue these points at any