

House of Commons Debates.

THIRD SESSION—SEVENTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH OF SIR RICHARD CARTWRIGHT, M.P.

ON

THE BUDGET

TUESDAY, 14th FEBRUARY, 1893.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. At any time, and under any possible circumstances, the annual exposition, or even the annual re-affirmation of the financial policy of the Government, is a matter of considerable interest to all classes of Canada; and, on the present occasion, when, as the Minister correctly told us, there is an extraordinary feeling of unrest and disquiet pervading the masses of the community, there is no doubt that it is an occasion of more than usual interest. I am not quite sure that I can congratulate the hon. gentleman on having entirely risen to the level of the occasion; but to those who will take the trouble to read between the lines of his speech, the speech was undoubtedly significant enough. To us who have been in the habit of listening to that hon. gentleman and his compeers for a great many years, there was a rather remarkable absence of what I must call the braggadocio with respect to the National Policy, which has heretofore characterized utterances from that side of the House. There was also an almost complete absence of those taunts which used to be flung across the floor to gentlemen on this side, bidding them bow to the will of the people, and assuring them that the National Policy was so rooted in the innermost instincts of the people of Canada that our puny efforts to disturb it were in vain. Sir, a change has come over the spirit of the dream of my hon. friend. He has had a vision. Possibly he may have dreamed that he heard the president of the young Conservatives of Toronto declaring that they were being annexed in job lots. Possibly he may have heard a gentleman who was whilom designated as the brains of the party, blaspheming the holy tariff, and speaking evil words even against the sacred gerrymander itself. Possibly the hon. gentleman is aware that the farmers' institutes, from one end of the country to another, are kicking against the wise and merciful provisions of his tariff. Possibly he is also aware that there is hardly a subsidized newspaper, or, perhaps, I should say, an insufficiently subsidized newspaper, that is

not helping to swell the chorus. Under these circumstances, I can well understand that our political Vicar of Bray might be a good deal puzzled as to what was the duty of a conscientious public man. Of course, the hon. gentleman knows that it is his duty to obey the powers that be, but, on the present occasion, the hon. gentleman is not quite sure who are the powers that be.

Mr. FOSTER. We know who are not.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. I do not think the hon. gentleman does. Well, Sir, under these circumstances, I hope the hon. gentleman won't take it amiss if I suggest that if he has not looked to Washington exactly, he has certainly looked to that high-souled American statesman immortalized by Lowell, whose policy, very like the hon. gentleman's, was summed up in these beautiful lines:

There may be men of greater talents,
Who can't sit stidder on the fence.

Although, looking at the hon. gentleman's performances, I may remind him that while a fence may be a steady seat, a tight-rope performance of the rather acrobatic character we have seen to-night, is not apt to be so. Sir, there is a sort of resemblance, if I may say so, between the hon. gentleman and his policy. If I may make the remark without offence, I believe the hon. gentleman commenced his career as a professional philanthropist. Now, I understand that the business of a professional philanthropist is to make everybody else better, as it was the business of the National Policy to make everybody richer. Sir, I wonder if the hon. gentleman ever heard his late lamented leader give his opinion of what a professional philanthropist is? If he has not, I must gratify his curiosity on the present occasion. It is known to some hon. gentlemen in this House that in my green and salad days, ever so many years ago, I was in the habit myself, sometimes, of sitting at the feet of that estimable Gamaliel, and I am bound to say that I have been the recipient of not a little useful, and a great deal of very entertaining, knowledge from that hon. gentleman. Now, Sir, I recollect one