

the following language, and he referred to it twice :

I say deliberately—and every hon. gentleman who listens to me knows it—that if this Bill be not passed, if we should be unable to carry a measure on this subject, then my right hon. friend will be obliged to retire and no other government can be formed which will command the confidence of parliament.

All I can say is that he has a very poor opinion of the people of Canada, that he has not that confidence in the wisdom and sense, good judgment and forbearance, generosity and enlightenment of the Canadian people that, as a Canadian, he should have.

Mr. FIELDING. Will my hon. friend permit me to insert in the quotation the words 'this parliament'? I was alluding to what might be done with the present parliament.

Mr. SPROULE. 'This parliament.' Parliaments are usually the result of appealing to the country and the wisdom of the people, and I take it that the good sense, and the good judgment, and the wisdom of the people of Canada are quite equal to the task of electing another parliament. I would not so much discredit the intelligence and the right aims of either the Roman Catholics or the French of this country as to insinuate that they would not be equal to the task of assisting to elect a parliament. Parliaments come and parliaments go, and we have never yet been confronted with that situation in Canada, and I am quite sure we are not likely to in the near future. The hon. minister said :

This is a religious question.

Well I can tell him that he was the first one in this House who said so. We thought it was a provincial autonomy Bill, that had to do with the establishment of two provinces in the Northwest, out of property that belongs to us, that it was a Bill for the purpose of giving them power to govern themselves, to legislate with regard to their own ends, to do the work which every province in the confederation that has provincial autonomy is doing at the present time. But the right hon. gentleman says it has turned into a religious question. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that be the case, who is responsible? Is it this side of the House? Did we introduce the element which would arouse any feeling along religious or sectarian or national lines? Not by any means. We were silent spectators at the introduction of that Bill, which contains the elements that have provoked the acrimonious feeling existing in some parts of the country to-day. It is, I submit, the right hon. gentleman himself who availed himself of the earliest opportunity—I was going to say the improper opportunity—of making, upon the introduction of this Bill, a very impassioned speech along those lines. His speech on that occasion was something very unusual,

Mr. SPROULE.

something very improper, something in my judgment quite uncalled for; for while it is competent and proper for the member who introduces a Bill to explain its provisions, he is expected to confine himself to that object and explain them as briefly as possible. But instead of an explanation, we had an exordium on other lines. We had raked up the condition of things before confederation. The right hon. gentleman conjured up again recollections of the various fights on religious issues that formerly prevailed between Upper and Lower Canada, when these two provinces were united. All these bitter recollections were pressed into service for the purpose of impressing on this House the wisdom and the necessity of passing this Bill. If there be acrimonious feeling excited in the country to-day, who is responsible? Certainly not the opposition but the government itself led by the right hon. gentleman, whose appeal in favour of the obnoxious features of the Bill was endorsed by the hon. the Finance Minister. These are the men who are responsible. It is they who have created the feeling of distrust which exists to-day. The right hon. gentleman declared that the press which supports the opposition has spared no effort to inflame the public mind on a very delicate subject. But if there were any such attempt, was it confined to the Conservative press? If there were any efforts to inflame the public mind, is that to be traced to the Conservative press alone? No, Sir, the criticisms of the press throughout the country were not confined to the newspapers supporting any political party. We had these criticisms from religious papers, independent papers, and political papers on both sides. And they all were agreed in the main that the government is doing an improper thing, something calculated to create a strong feeling of aversion throughout the country against the measure and the government itself. Is not that a fact, Mr. Speaker? Need I point to the very logical, moderate and fair criticisms of the 'Globe'—the organ above all others which ought to voice the sentiments of the present government—and criticisms which, I humbly submit, would do credit to any newspaper in Canada. What is the press of the country doing to-day? The organs of public opinion are, as a mirror, reflecting public sentiment, calling on the government to take warning, calling on parliament to take warning, and not to do to-day what afterwards they may not be able to undo. Is the press to blame because it contains denunciations of the offensive features of this measure? Is not the press in this respect exercising a public duty, and can it be charged with inflaming public passion and arousing sectarian strife because it calls attention to the dangers of this Bill? Not at all. It is not the press of the country but the right hon. gentleman and his friends who must be held responsible for the present conditions.