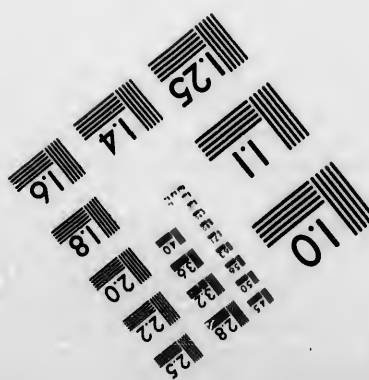
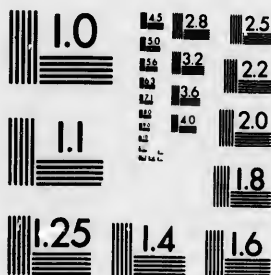


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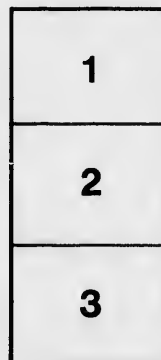
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House of Commons Debates.

FIFTH SESSION—EIGHTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH

OF

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN, M.P.

ON

INQUIRY INTO ELECTION FRAUDS

OTTAWA, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 1900

Mr. NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN (West Assinibola). Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the House has listened with a great deal of interest and edification to the speech which has fallen from the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton). Nothing could be more interesting to this House, nothing more worthy of its attention, than to discuss its demeanour and efficiency. I am glad that the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) was not in the House a few moments ago when one of his foremost followers declared that the conduct, the demeanour and the dignity of the House have fallen so low under the leadership of the right hon. gentleman that twenty-five years ago, when this country, generally, was not as advanced as it is to-day, it was far ahead of what it is now, under the leadership of the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. CHARLTON. I must ask the permission of my hon. friend (Mr. Davin) to set him right. I attributed none of the features I condemned to the management of the right hon. leader of the House.

Mr. DAVIN. It is no point of order. My hon. friend took his cue of dignity from the right hon. gentleman, and nobody has a better right to talk about dignity than the Prime Minister, because, I say, with truth, that nobody can assume an air of dignity better than the right hon. gentleman. But, what is the good of dignity and of demeanour, if, beneath that dignity and demeanour there is no real manliness of public character? What have we seen here to-day? When my hon. and learned friend here (Mr. Borden, Halifax) pleads for an opportunity of making an inquiry into the scandals connected with the Brockville and West Huron elections, the right hon. gentleman first blocks him by stating that he is going to

on the line of red tape, of parliamentary etiquette, and then falls back on a declaration about his own dignity. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you have ever seen the picture Dignity and Impudence? I will say here, with all deference to the right hon. gentleman, that where a Prime Minister, in the face of such scandals as were revealed here last year, before the whole country and before parliament, puts up his thin screen of dignity to block inquiry, impudence and dignity go very close together. We have had, in the history of this country, and in the history of all countries, specimens of dignity and of politeness where there was not much solidity of character. The exquisite urbanity of Charles II. has passed into a proverb, but the epitaph on Charles II. was:

Here lies our mutton-eating king,
Whose word no man relies on;
He never said a foolish thing,
He never did a wise one.

I do not know whether the right hon. gentleman is fond of mutton, but I do know that he very seldom falls to say just the right thing. I wish I could add that he never failed to do the right thing. He never fails to say the right thing; he never succeeds in doing it; and certainly to-day he failed to do the right thing, when my hon. friend (Mr. Borden, Halifax) asked for the opportunity of doing that which is the great privilege of a member of parliament. Why, Sir, what is the meaning of this parliament where we are speaking? What is its great function? It is not only the great consult, but it is the great inquest of the nation, and we are here to inquire into and to probe everything. I say here, Mr. Speaker, that not one of the many things that during these last four years have disfigured that government, and disfigured the reputation

of that Prime Minister; not one of them will do more damage to the government or impress the country more forcibly than when it goes abroad that when an hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Borden) wishes to pursue an inquiry that was not completed last year, an inquiry that showed there was a corpus delicti of the gravest sort, the right hon. gentleman should get up and say: My dignity won't allow it. Dignity! What place has dignity in that connection? What is he doing? He is shielding rascals from exposure. That is all very fine for dignity. I do not like to use the comparison that rises to my mind when I hear these lip professions of dignity, and then whispering to the rascals behind: Never fear, I will shield you; I will throw around you the weight of my high position; I will—

Mr. CHARLTON. I rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Davin) is imputing conduct to the leader of the government in the highest degree dishonourable. He is asserting that the leader of the government tells his followers in the rear that he will protect them in their rascality.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Not at all.

Mr. CHARLTON. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that such is not parliamentary language.

Mr. DAVIN. Mr. Speaker, everybody knows what I was referring to. I was referring to these rascals that were exposed before a committee of which I am a member. I was referring to rascals that hon. and learned gentlemen in this House did everything they could to shield, doing everything they could to prevent that inquiry from being effective. And what did they do at last? Although we had nine witnesses there ready to be examined, they went back without being examined, because those gentlemen opposite would not sit of an evening. The hon. and learned member from Halifax (Mr. Russell), a strong lawyer from whom I would have expected something better, he threw all his ingenuity, and the hon. member for Kingston (Mr. Britton) threw all his pettifoggery in the way of anything like an inquiry.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES (Sir Louis Davies). Order. I ask you if it is parliamentary, Mr. Speaker, to accuse an hon. member of this House, a learned gentleman at the bar, of being guilty of pettifoggery. I appeal to you, Sir, is that parliamentary?

Mr. SPEAKER. My impression is that it is not parliamentary to apply the term pettifoggery to the action of a committee of this House.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. It was applied to one member of that committee.

Mr. DAVIN. Well, I can withdraw it. He threw all what in him is not pettifoggery, and that is not a great deal. Now, Sir, there was another gentleman in the history of England, Chesterfield. He was the pink of politeness, but he had not a character that we would think a great deal of. Then we come to Beau Brummel, and then to George IV., the finest gentleman in Europe. But we need not go to Thackeray's Four Georges to apprehend how much real respect he was entitled to at our hands, and after all, Mr. Speaker, when we are to judge the character of public men, that they can bow gracefully is not enough; we want from them such demeanour going to the root of action as will enable us to respect them. I agree with my hon. friend from Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) that this House has fallen within the last four years, and it has fallen because my right hon. friend, who is, I admit, in so many ways a charming man, has not weight enough to keep his followers behind him in order. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Charlton) accused the hon. member from York (Mr. Foster) of having said he would block the business of the House. The ex-Finance Minister (Mr. Foster) said nothing of the kind. He (Mr. Foster) said that if the Prime Minister would allow his followers to weigh down the Order paper with questions such as have disfigured it from day to day, and which, as my hon. friend says, has disgraced it; then the ex-Finance Minister said that two could play at that game. If, Sir, the opposition wishes to resort to that sort of warfare, it would be an extraordinary thing if we could not bring something more like powder and shot than these poor wretched volleys of soap suds that have come there in the shape of questions from day to day. And if we have to resort to it, it will not be soap suds we will send across the House, but we will send dum, dum bullets that will explode in the bosoms of hon. gentlemen opposite and we will expose the mean heart that lurks beneath the star.

Mr. WOOD. That is more Boer like.

Mr. DAVIN. I love the hon. member for Hamilton (Mr. Wood) under all conditions, except when he tries to be witty, and then he loses for me that perennial interest and that abiding beauty that are his chief characteristics.

Mr. WOOD. There are two of us.

Mr. DAVIN. Now, Mr. Speaker, I must say with all respect that I have had myself a great deal of parliamentary experience. I am now getting to be one of the old members of this House. I occupied a more elevated, and, I was going to say—but I will not say it, out of respect to my brethren of the hour—I was going to say the more dignified position of a seat in the reporters' gallery in the House of Commons in England. I say that the man who sits in the

reporters' gallery—especially in England—one session is equal to a session and a half of a member sitting in the House, because for one reason he is more there. Therefore, sitting there for seven years is equivalent to sitting in the House for ten years. I may say to you, Mr. Speaker, with great respect, that my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) transgressed no parliamentary etiquette here to-day. What he was indulging in is what is called invective. You know, Sir, that so great an authority as Mr. Disraeli, afterwards Lord Beaconsfield, said: that invective is the great ornament of debate, and without invective our debates here would be very flavourless. If those gentlemen opposite, who sometimes indulge in that sort of thing which has distressed the soul of my hon. friend from Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) to such an extent that all the dignity in his soul is withered under the blighting influence of what he sees around him; if those gentlemen opposite would seek sometimes to indulge in invective instead of whatever indescribable thing they resort to, it would add greatly to the interest of our debates. Now, what was my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) saying when he was stopped? He was using language that attributed puerility or boyishness to the Prime Minister. And what did he mean? He meant moral boyishness. He said it because he considered that the reason given by the Prime Minister for not acceding to the request of my hon. and learned friend, was not a masculine or a manly reason, that it was consequently puerile, and he used strong language to express that opinion, and showed himself indignant—and we all felt his indignation—why? Because, Sir, the right hon. gentleman who is at the head of this parliament, and who is the keeper of its honour and efficiency, had pledged himself to a policy which reduces by 50 per cent—aye, by ninety per cent—its efficiency, as the great inquest of the nation. Why, then, should not a leading man on this side be indignant and vehement, and express his indignation, when the right hon. gentleman had taken a stand lamentable in regard to this parliament—and lamentable, I dare aver, as to the estimate the people of Canada will form of my right hon. friend?

Now, Sir, I want to ask the attention of the House for one minute to what occurred last session. We had in that committee room a meeting. Only five polls were investigated. The principal polls investigated, were No. 4 of the township of Colborne, and No. 3 of the township of Goderich. Daniel Cummings was the deputy at No. 4. There were 125 ballots to the ballot pad: 98 voted; there were none spoiled; and 27 were unused. 68 were marked for Holmes, and 39 for McLean; majority, 38. But of the 68 marked for Holmes, 14 were bogus—14 different from the 84 and 27, printed on different paper. An expert proved that the 14 were bogus; but it needed no expert, for

any man with half an eye, had only to look at them to see that they were bogus. But we had before the committee an expert, Mr. Harvey, whose evidence I have before me, and this man had with him an instrument called a micrometer, which he applied to measuring the ballots in the ballot pad, the ballot papers and the counterfoils. He measured these 14, and what did he say?

Q. And you have already given us the thickness of these ballots, 3—1 to 14. As a paper-maker you are familiar with all the processes of paper-making, are you not? A. Yes.

Q. Is it possible, I ask you, that these fourteen ballots came out of these stubs? A. No, sir.

Q. It is absolutely impossible? A. Absolutely.

Then, later on, he was asked:

Q. You are positive, then, that not one of these ballots of series three, including one to fourteen and all between, could have come off these stubs? A. It is impossible.

Not only were these 14 shown to be bogus from their measurements, but they bore the initials of the deputy in ink, whereas the remaining 84 bore his initials in pencil. I was a member of that committee, and was present, though I took no further part than that of a juror or judge. But my hon. friend from Halifax, who conducted the case, assisted by Mr. Powell, showed by cumulative demonstration, that this man Cummings, instead of destroying the counterfoils, as he was bound to do by his written directions, was accustomed to put them into his right-hand pocket. What he did do, it is clear, was to put the counterfoil into his right-hand pocket, and out of an inside pocket take a ballot marked for Holmes.

Mr. BRITTON. There is not a word of that in the evidence.

Mr. DAVIN. There is not a word of that in the evidence? Have I said there is?

Mr. BRITTON. It is just made up by yourself.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order.

Mr. DAVIN. I will not trouble you, Mr. Speaker, to call the hon. gentleman to order; I will brush him aside myself. What I say is that it is a plain inference. How did these bogus ballots get into the ballot box? This is the natural surmise, that when he put the counterfoil into his right-hand pocket, he took out of another pocket the bogus ballot that he wanted to put into the box. Forty-one men who were brought before the committee swore that they had marked ballots for McLean. Two other voters, who were ill had sworn to the same effect before the county judge of Huron. Therefore, the real vote was 54 for Holmes, and 44 for McLean, 14 having been stolen, and this having been done with the deputy's connivance. Now, take poll No. 3, in the township of Goderich, where James Farr was deputy returning officer. Farr, like Cummings, put the counterfoils in his pocket instead of destroying

them. 118 men voted, 123 ballots came out of the box. You can see that no ordinary commonplace Conservative could do that. It required a conjurer, one of those fellows who can bring any quantity of ribbons out of his mouth, or one of those Chinese conjurers who bring out of a box what they do not put into it.

Mr. WOOD. Was he not a Conservative ?

Mr. DAVIN. Oh, no, he was not. He was proved to have been a Liberal. But, Mr. Speaker, suppose he were a Conservative, he would have been a Conservative who had left the ranks of Conservatism, like the present Minister of Public Works, and others of that ilk in the present ministry, and who show themselves more demoralized than the worst of the Liberals. Of the 123 ballots, 72 were for Holmes, 40 were for McLean, 10 had no mark, and 1 was rejected. The ballot box must, therefore, have been stuffed to the extent of 5 ballots, at least. All the ballots marked for McLean were initialled, several for Holmes were not initialled, and 22 of an entirely different appearance from the remaining ballots marked for Holmes, different from all marked for McLean, and different from the unmarked ballots—22 obviously bogus. Fifty-five men solemnly averred or swore that they had voted for McLean at this poll, although only 40 ballots of the 55 were found for him. Of the 55, 35 were examined, and nine were present waiting to be examined, but the Liberal members would not sit in the evenings.

What about Farr ? We ought to pause when we speak about Farr. He and several others, Cap. Sullivan and Dan Ferguson, the slugger and the plugger, are dear to the last acquisition to this ministry, the hon. gentleman from North Oxford (Mr. Sutherland)—very dear to his heart on various accounts. These gentlemen had one prominent amongst them, and that was Farr. And what was his history ? I was present at the meeting of the committee when it was proved that just a day after my hon. friend from Halifax had moved in this House for a committee, Farr threw up a good situation in Toronto and went in to hiding. He admitted to witnesses that he was hiding, and he also admitted that he had voted himself twenty-two times at this election, that he had been furnished with a ticket and promised money to make himself scarce. He told four witnesses that he was in trouble over West Huron, and that whilst in hiding he was visited by, and did visit Mr. James Vance, the lieutenant of the Liberal organizer of the province of Ontario. Farr called on Vance, and Vance had a telegram from Ottawa : 'Keep Farr low.' This is what Farr told a witness who was examined in the committee. Farr also declared to the poll clerk, on the day of the election, with the candour that seems to

distinguish all these gentlemen, that he had put 'thirteen damned good ballots into the box.' I read the other day, and I hope it will be brought forward in this discussion, a letter from one of the officers of the Ontario government who is mixed up in the West Elgin fraud, which surpasses in candour even this avowal, and I hope that my hon. friend who has this letter in his possession will read it. It is a fine piece of scoundrelly, ballot thieving literature. A scrutineer standing near Farr, picked up a ballot from McLean, initialled by Farr. Farr snatched it and tore it up into pieces, and said it was nothing. That was the act of a guilty man. Goderich polling booth No. 2 was on the same street, immediately opposite No. 3, where Farr presided. At No. 2, Colborne, two ballots for Holmes were found to be forged.

With such revelations brought out last session in the committee, and with the declaration of my hon. friend, that he has fresh evidence, and can probe these things still further, can any one be astonished that my hon. friend the ex-Finance Minister, felt indignant when the Prime Minister took the position that he would do all he could to block the inquiry any further ? What does it mean ? It means this. It means that here we have a number of criminals worse than the majority of men in any penitentiary, for these criminals are striking at the life of free institutions. These ballot pluggers and thieves are worse than any criminals in the penitentiaries. My hon. friend from Halifax wants to get at them, and here comes dignity in its most attractive and powerful garb, the voice of the Prime Minister, who says : 'Stand back ; you must not touch one of these ; you must not inquire ; we will not help you to inquire.' That is a very serious stand to take. I say it destroys the efficiency of parliament. Talk about some little defect in parliamentary demeanour, talk about some little looseness of language, talk about some violent invectives—why none of these things, not the most violent invective heard within the walls of any parliament, could do such harm to the morale of parliament as for the Prime Minister to declare that he was going to stand by ruffians of this description and shield them from discovery. I would to God that a man would arise at this hour who would put into words that could not die, the shame, the rage, the scorn, the contempt, which every man who loves free institutions, must feel in our having a Prime Minister who seemed at one time capable of much better things, but who, under the influence of the sluggers and pluggers and the Farris in politics—Farris not in name, but in act—who have climbed close to the seat of power, has sunk so low that he will stand up here and declare in a brazen manner that his dignity stands in the way of allowing an inquiry into this rescaldom of Brockville and Huron.

