

to point out that the former Minister of Militia asserted that during the first year he was not in control, that he was hampered and then he says that having submitted for the first year under protest, after great effort, he succeeded in obtaining some control and that then he enacted several important reforms. At all events, the whole matter is very much confused. So confused is it that even on the day which preceded the day of my hon. friend's resignation, there was a controversy upon this point between him and the Prime Minister. The ex-Minister of Militia will pardon me if I say that he does not mince matters as to what he has to say. In a letter which he addressed to the Prime Minister on the first of November last he referred to this complaint again and there he stated that in his administration he had been hampered—hampered by some of his colleagues, and hampered by commissions. My hon. friend on this point as to commissions speaks in no unqualified language. This is what he says, addressing himself to the Prime Minister:

Permit me to draw your attention to nearly every Commission which has been formed. They look beautiful on paper, but few, if any of them have been anything like perfect in practice. The Hospitals Commission, the Pensions Board and the National Service Commission all seemed lovely when sent out, but every one concerned with them knows of the absurdity therein contained.

That is a judgment in regard to which I think many in this House will not be disposed to differ from my hon. friend the ex-Minister of Militia, but let that pass. On this occasion he refers again to the fact that he had not control in Great Britain and the Prime Minister has answered him already when he has said:

So far as I am aware you exercised the same control and direction over the forces in Great Britain during the first year as subsequently.

Then comes the rejoinder of the ex-Minister and it is a rejoinder in which we recognize our friend of old. This is what he writes to the Prime Minister:

Sir Robert, no one knows better than you that this statement is incorrect. This last year, with the full concurrence of the War Office, our management and direction have been given every consideration, and by their request.

There is between the Prime Minister and his colleague an absolute diversity as to the facts: Which is in the right, and which is in the wrong with regard to them, it is not for me to say, but I repeat that this is a further evidence that during those two

years there was constant jarring and friction and no unity of thought or action. The Minister of Militia was at that time engaged in a close controversy with the Prime Minister and he was threatened with dismissal. But he made a further complaint; he made, then and there, the complaint that he had been hampered in his administration not only by commissions, but even by his colleagues, and he framed his complaint in these terms:

Further, had I ventured to conduct this force on the basis of formal Orders in Council, the first division would not have left Valcartier yet, and you know yourself how, by technicalities, the second division was held up for four months through little petty haggling on the question of motor trucks.

That is pretty direct and pretty positive but it is immediately followed by another letter of the 9th November which contains another and a still more positive statement:

Moreover—

He says, again addressing himself to the Prime Minister:

—it is difficult for me to recall where you have actively supported me in the passage of any Order in Council concerning the upbuilding of the militia when opposed by two members of the Cabinet usually antagonistic to anything proposed by me. As you are aware, it took up four months in the midst of this great war to fight through the principles of purchasing, for the second division, trucks at the lowest wholesale prices instead of allowing large commissions to local agents who would have nothing whatever to do with securing the order.

Now, Sir, that is a pretty serious charge. Here is a charge made by the ex-Minister of Militia that for four months he was prevented from sending the second division by the interference of some of his colleagues who were fighting over the principle of purchasing at the lowest prices. I recall very well that the atmosphere at one time was highly charged, that there were charges and counter-charges. I have no opinion to offer, I have no right to express an opinion, but we have the evidence of the ex-minister who says that he was hampered for four months at a time when minutes were as precious as hours and weeks and months. He says that he was prevented from sending the troops of which we were in such need on the battle field. I have only to remark that I have not found in the whole of the correspondence any denial of that statement made by the ex-Minister of Militia. Now, I come to the main subject. I said a moment ago that the cause of contention