

Mr. D. D. McKENZIE (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Whatever conclusion this House may reach in connection with the resolution brought before us this evening by the hon. member for Laurier and Outremont (Mr. DuTremblay), I am sure that we ought to be very thankful to him for preparing and submitting it to the House. First, because he has given us very good reasons in support of it, and has made clear the motives that moved him in bringing this very important question before the House and the country. And second, because the House has had the even greater advantage—I may say without any disparagement of him—of a declaration from the Acting Prime Minister (Sir Thomas White) upon this most important question.

We have had from the Acting Prime Minister in splendid detail the history of the war in connection with the question, and the various stages through which it has gone, not only as concerning ourselves, but as concerning the various countries implicated in this tremendous war, and we have had the advantage of getting the views of the hon. gentleman on it. Let me tell you, Sir, and the Government, that whatever notions they may have had themselves—and I use the word “notions” advisedly—or whatever opinions they may have had on this question, the country was not at all well informed as to the Government’s attitude.

It is a well known fact, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps ten months ago the Globe and other leading papers in this country giving their support and influence to the Government, spoke strongly in favour of, and gave direct reasons why there should be, an indemnity. Among their reasons they stated that Germany herself had established the precedent in exacting enormous tributes from cities brought under her sway during the progress of the war. It was reported that the authorities of some of the great cities which had to capitulate to Germany had the proposition put up to them either to pay enormous amounts of money, or in the alternative the mayor and the clergymen and the leading citizens were to be brought to slaughter. That precedent having been established as the Germans were over-running Belgium and northern France, it was used as an argument, and I think a very strong argument, in favour of the proposition that Germany herself would have to pay a large indemnity when we came to settle our accounts with her. More than that, if we go back to Germany’s war with France in 1870, we find that both in money

and in land she exacted the pound of flesh. So that, so far as precedent is concerned, there is no ground for complaint from Germany at all, as more than any other nation she has herself established that precedent for the exaction and payment of war indemnities.

Then the question would be largely, if not altogether, whether Germany and her Allies are able to pay the indemnity to meet the expenses of the war. It is difficult to say at this stage what Germany can pay. One thing we can say is this, that while France, Belgium, Roumania and other countries have been devastated, nothing was hurt or displaced in Germany, nor was there much devastation in Austria, nor very much in Turkey, as far as I am aware. They are ready to start anew, their factories and their farms are intact, and all their facilities for general advancement are very well equipped now, and they were very well equipped before the war. On the contrary we are left in the state of devastation in which Germany was able to place us. Consequently I think we must not receive with too much credit any representations that Germany may make as to her inability to pay an indemnity.

The leader of the House (Sir Thomas White) spoke about my hon. friend from Laurier-Outremont, stating that we should get an indemnity from England.

9 p.m. That is, he understood my hon. friend to say that we went in to help England, and that therefore, whether there was an indemnity or not, England should pay us. I think if he will read the resolution he will find exactly what my hon. friend from Laurier-Outremont meant, for it is given in the resolution itself. He simply meant that if England gets a lump sum indemnity we should get a share. That is what the resolution says. But my good friend from Laurier-Outremont is not as handy in expressing himself in the English language as is the leader of the House. Therefore he made a slip, and instead of putting it as he did in his written resolution, where he had the time to think it over and write it down, he said that England should give us a straight payment for the services we had rendered. I can assure the House and the hon. the leader, having discussed this resolution with my friend from Laurier-Outremont, that the latter was not what he had in his mind and there was no intention whatever of claiming compensation from England for any service this country has rendered, for he made it abundantly clear, when he stated we were at war as well as Great Britain, that it was our own