

CANADA

House of Commons Debates
OFFICIAL REPORT

SPEECH

OF

SIR GEORGE FOSTER, K.C.M.G.,

MEMBER FOR NORTH TORONTO

ON

THE WAR BUDGET

In the House of Commons, Ottawa, on Monday, March 15, 1915.

Hen. Sir GEORGE FOSTER (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I desire to thank my hon. friend from South Cape Breton (Mr. Carroll) for his courtesy. Some time in the future, when I get to be as young as he is and when he gets to be as old as I am, I will repay him the compliment very heartily.

It is not to be expected that after this debate has run its course, as it has for now about a month, anything very new can be said upon the somewhat limited questions at issue. I do not undertake to occupy a few moments of the time of the House this afternoon with any idea that I shall greatly instruct or enlighten its members. I will, however, make some few remarks, partly by way of review or restatement of much that has been said hitherto.

I thought I observed in the speech of my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) that he approached the action which he proposed taking with something of a troubled conscience, and the opening part of his speech appeared to me to be a good deal like an apology for what he intended to move, and what might result from his action in proposing an amendment. He spoke of the necessity for an Opposition always maintaining its right and power of criticism. I do not think any one on either

side of the House would attempt to deprive an Opposition, or indeed any member of the House, of the right to criticise, and even in a case like this, where in a certain degree an understanding had been reached last year—not after deliberate conference or negotiation, but arising out of a general sense of what was fitting and best in the circumstances—that support should be given by all parties in the House to the offer of services of arms from Canada in the war, and the vigorous prosecution of that offer. Then my right hon. friend laid down two propositions, and, with the consent of the House, I will state what they were. My right hon. friend said:

When at the opening of hostilities in the month of August last the Government announced that it had offered the services of Canada to the Government of Great Britain, if these services should be found useful, we on this side of the House, His Majesty's loyal Opposition, the Liberal party of Canada, declared at once that to this policy we would offer no objection, but on the contrary that we would give it loyal support. . . .

We went further: not only did we give our support to the Government, but we thought it would be more in accordance with the fitness of things that we should refrain even from discussing those domestic problems which always divide a free people.

These two statements taken together sum up the position of my right hon. friend and