

Mr. BALLANTYNE: Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to add to what I have already stated on behalf of the Government.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: It is rather important that the position should be made perfectly clear. I read from the statement which the minister has been kind enough to submit to me the following words:

In view of Canada's heavy financial commitments and of the fact that Britain has not as yet decided on her permanent naval policy, and of the approaching Imperial Conference at which the question of naval defence of the Empire will come up for discussion between the Home Government and the Overseas Dominions, it has been decided to defer in the meantime action in regard to the adoption of a permanent naval policy for Canada.

If these words mean anything they mean that at the present time the Government has no policy and proposes—

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Well, let me repeat the words: "It has been decided to defer in the meantime"—that is, until this conference is held in the summer or whenever it is the intention to hold it. It has been decided, until that time, to defer action in regard to the adoption of a permanent naval policy for Canada. Surely this must mean that at the present time there is no permanent policy and that the Government intends to wait until after some Imperial conference has been held. In view of this fact, I think that the question asked by my hon. friend (Mr. Devlin) a moment ago is quite pertinent. I think that this House has a right to know whether the Government intends to consult Parliament on the policy which it proposes to adopt, also whether the Government intends to make any intimation to the House as to what policy it proposes to lay before the Imperial Conference for consideration.

Mr. MICHAEL CLARK (Red Deer): I may say that I endorse, so far as I can catch them, some of the remarks of my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition. I do not know how far I am in order in saying anything upon the statement which has been made to the House by the minister, but if I am out of order the minister was equally so. I think I am clear on that point.

Mr. SPEAKER: It is customary for ministerial announcements to be made upon the Orders of the Day. The hon. member himself will recall many instances in which such was done. That being so, it does not, however, open the subject for general dis-

[Mr. Devlin.]

cussion. But in view of the undoubted importance of the subject, it would be quite competent for the hon. member to put a question to the minister, although he may not enter into a discussion.

Mr. MICHAEL CLARK: The announcement we have heard is one of the most extraordinary statements that have ever been presented to Parliament. As the leader of the Opposition has said, it avows that the Government have no policy—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, no.

Mr. MICHAEL CLARK:—no permanent policy; and it goes on to say at the end of the statement, that nevertheless they have a policy which has been intimated to the British Admiralty. They have accepted the ships which have been offered by the British Admiralty in the place of others which are described as "useless and obsolete." As I may not discuss the subject, I shall put my views in the form of a question, and I would ask the Minister of Naval Service how long he thinks it will be before the ships he has now got will be useless and obsolete.

Mr. DEVLIN: In view of the importance of the subject and of the fact that it may not be debated, I should also like to ask a question or two of the minister. Have the Government been instructed in any way or informed by the Home authorities of the advisability of the action which the Government is now about to take?

Mr. BALLANTYNE: The Government and the Parliament of Canada decide all issues of that character on their own responsibility.

Mr. ERNEST LAPOINTE: But they do not decide anything now.

Mr. DEVLIN: Why, then, is the minister waiting for the Imperial Conference?

Mr. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Mr. DEVLIN: I have not finished, Mr. Speaker, I have another question.

Rt. Hon. Sir GEORGE FOSTER: The minister has made a statement which is before the House, and I think it would be advisable, seeing the different renderings which have been given it so far, that members should have the answer before them and see exactly what it is, so that they may not be led into making mistakes as to its interpretation. The Government has made its statement in reference to the policy; it