

decide the fate of the empire adversely. But apart from that tremendous consideration, I do not see how this thing is practicable. I understand thoroughly, and every man in this House understands thoroughly, that there may be some little frontier war in India or with some savage foe in Africa of which we know absolutely nothing in this country, and in which we would have absolutely no part. In such a case, we are technically at war with that country wherever it may be, but so far as active participation in a war of that kind is concerned, we might have no active part in it whatever. But I am not talking of that kind of war. I am talking of a war in which the empire might be engaged in a struggle with one of the great naval powers. For my part, I do not see how it is possible, in the first place, to work out this scheme which is proposed by the government. I do not see how it is possible for this reason. When our ships are on the high seas they will I presume, be flying the flag of the empire, the British flag.

An hon. MEMBER. Will they?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not ask any question about that. I take it for granted.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Hear, hear.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. If they are flying the British flag, then they will be subject to attack, and if they are subject to attack, what are they going to do. They will defend ourselves, I suppose; or will they signal to the enemy that the Governor in Council has not yet passed any order in respect of taking part in the war, and therefore that they cannot do anything. If they are going to do that, it is for them either to fly a neutral flag or strike the British flag, one or the other. I do not see any escape from that situation. How is it possible to work it out? There are two great considerations. In the first place, either our ships must go behind fortifications, or they must be liable to attack. If they are liable to attack, they must either fight or surrender,—or in the third alternative, they must fly some neutral flag; they must go out of the empire, which means that this country goes out of the empire. That is why I think this is unworkable. Then, I repeat, there is the tremendous consideration that, should there be two weeks' delay in deciding whether our fleet shall fight or not, that delay might decide adversely the fate of the empire. How will it work out on the other hand? Suppose that the British flag on one of our ships should be insulted—suppose provocation were given which would lead to war if we were an independent power—how will the converse of what I have been stating work out? Is the imperial government to say that their fleet

shall take no part in the war until Great Britain herself becomes involved? If our fleet is to have a right, under the provisions of this proposed statute, to abstain from any war in which Great Britain may be involved with some great naval power, then if our coasts are attacked by the ships of that power, is it to be part of the arrangement between the mother country and the great dominions of the empire that the fleet of the mother country shall be permitted to be neutral? If the proposition seriously put forward by the government is one which we may expect to see consummated in the future, why should not Great Britain take precisely the same attitude when our coasts are attacked, or our ships are sunk? Why should not they say: We have not yet decided that we will take part in this war? If one proposition is sound, it seems to me the other is sound, and either one proposition or the other is absolutely inconsistent with the continuance of the integrity of this empire.

Mr. HUGHES. I desire to add a word to what the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) has said. Suppose that one of these ships goes beyond the three-mile limit in time of trouble, who is responsible for her? Is the British government going to assume responsibility; or will it be the Canadian government? And, if so, what is to be the consequence? I maintain now, as I stated when I first addressed the House on this matter, that this Dominion has no authority to create a fleet that will go beyond the three-mile limit of the coasts of Canada.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I have no quarrel with hon. members on the other side who take exception to the proposition involved in this section. It is an essential part of this legislation. Are we going to be automatically involved in all the wars in which England may be engaged, or are we to be allowed to have some judgment and some say in the matter? That is the proposition. We must have a navy—I take it that all parties agree to that now, I follow the discussion in this House with some care, and, as I analysed the speeches, particularly those made towards the end of the discussion, it seemed to me that every one was based upon the opinion that we must have a national navy of our own. True, there was some question as to whether we should have it now, or later, but I do not think that any body maintains that Canada, having reached a population of nearly eight millions, can go on indefinitely without a navy. There are men in the city of Ottawa who can recall the time when there was not a uniformed policeman in this city. But Ottawa has grown, and the