

respect for Sir Wilfrid, and I hope he has friendship for me, but we differed ten years ago when I had to take part against the Premier of Quebec at the time. Again, not more than five years ago I opposed Sir Wilfrid on his Naval Bill; I took the responsibility of my stand on that occasion, and I know the Tories were very glad to use my speech and my views against Sir Wilfrid Laurier at that time, to serve their purpose.

This is the total refutation of the imputation that is conveyed by the correspondent of the Winnipeg Telegram, and I hope he will take the opportunity of correcting that impression.

WAR CONTRACTS.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF MILITIA.

On the Orders of the Day:

Sir SAM HUGHES (Minister of Militia and Defence): Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the House, I desire to make a personal explanation. On the 9th of March I left Ottawa for England. A week or so prior to my leaving, I spoke to my right hon. friend the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden) and some of my colleagues, explaining to them the necessity of my going. I asked the Prime Minister if he would see the leader of the Opposition (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and ascertain if there were any questions likely to arise in connection with my department which would require my attendance here. It was agreed that I should see the leader of the Opposition, and I did so. I saw also the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. E. M. Macdonald), the hon. junior member for Halifax (Mr. A. K. Maclean), and others on that side, and asked them if there were any questions affecting my department that would require my attendance here. The leader of the Opposition frankly stated that he did not know of any; but also, with the statesmanship which characterizes him, he declined to assume responsibility for all his followers. But I think I am justified in saying that he said he did not know of anything—

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Personally.

Sir SAM HUGHES:—personally, he did not know of anything that would justify him in saying that I should require to remain here longer. None of the other prominent members of the Opposition could conceive of anything that might arise. It was known that I was going away. Needless to say, I did not “go duck-hunting with a brass band;” I did not placard the

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

fact that I was crossing the ocean; a statement was given out that I was going South, which was perfectly true.

A day or so before I went away, the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Carvell) spoke. I think I intimated to that gentleman also that I was going away. Those hon. members who will recall the night of his speech will recollect how his eye wandered to the clock, praying “for night or Blucher.” They will recollect that he repeated himself; and, if Hansard correctly reports him, he repeated himself over and over and over again. I thought—I was unkind enough to think—that he was killing time, for it was known that I was leaving the next day at noon, and that was the only chance I should have to get at him. I asked him that night to continue and finish his speech, and indicated that I would be only too delighted to take up the few minutes that were necessary in reply—it would not take very long—before I left. But he pleaded weariness, and the sympathy of Mr. Speaker and the House was accorded him, and he got an opportunity to finish his speech next day. I do not know that much harm was done, however.

I shall not refer to my visit to England, and the splendid work the boys are doing, both in England and at the front, although so many of them are going down, I am sorry to say.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear

Sir SAM HUGHES: But when I received the message that startling statements had been made in the House involving the honour of the Shell Committee, and, indirectly and to that extent, my own honour, I returned on the first and fastest steamer. I rather enjoyed the trip. I was glad and I am glad at the chance to clear the atmosphere.

In this connection, I wish to thank the hon. member for East Toronto (Hon. A. E. Kemp) for his kindness in acting so splendidly as Minister of Militia during my absence. I found everything in a very satisfactory condition in the department when I arrived. I have also to state that during my attendance at the sessions of this Royal Commission—and I intend looking after it fairly well—I shall do myself the honour, as has always been my custom when temporarily absent, to ask the Prime Minister to look after anything that may be necessary in connection with the Militia Department.

However, on my return, I have no hesitation in saying, I was surprised at the