GOVERNMENT POLICY ON NAVY IS THE RIGHT ONE

Ralph Smith Delivers a Notable Speech in the House of Commons in the Course of the Naval Debate.

In the course of the navy debate at Ottawa a speech was made by Ralph Smith, member for Nanaimo, which has been very highly spoken of, both for its merits as a piece of oratory and for its value as a contribution to the subject uppermost in Canadian politics at the present moment. For the benefit of its readers the Times reproduces the speech, which was as follows:

I have listened carefully to every word my hon. friend (Mr. Cowan, Vancouver) has said and to every argument he has tried to present, and I say that no hon. member in this House has submitted to this parliament a depreciation of the leading men of this country in any way equal to the denunciations of the hon. member. He began by telling the House how very important it was that we should eliminate politics from this debate, and I submit to the intelligence of every fair-minded man in this parliament that the hon. gentleman strayed very far from his own advice. He went on to argue in his own way that the Prime Minister was propagating, preaching and proclaiming a doctrine of absolute independence and that he was using his influence at every opportunity upon the hustings in certain portions of this country in favor of a spirit of allenation from Great Britain. Mr. Speaker, that is a charge not against the Prime Minister but against the intelligence of the British people in this country. There is no one man in this country to-day—even if the Prime Minister had the disposition the hon. member speaks of—strong enough to use an influence that could alienate the attachment that the great mass of the Canadian people have for Britain and British institutions.

But that is not the doctrine that hon. gentlemen opposite preach all the time. In one partion of the country they cry out that the right hon. gentleman is too British, and in another portion of the country they declare—and I know full well where that portion of the country is—that the right hon. gentleman is not British enough. We never have gone through a federal campaign in British Columbia, but that the principal declaration of hon. gentlemen opposite is—the repeated statement that the Prime Minister of Canada is not loyal to British sentiment, or to the interests of the people of the West. No question has ever been submitted to this parliament of greater importance or of more far reaching effect, and no question was ever submitted to this parliament that ought to receive the sober deliberation of this House more than the question now under discussion. And yet I submit, sir, and I think the members of this House will agree with me, that to-night we have had to listen for two hours to the performance of a political mountebank.

If evidence of right about face is to be taken, evidnce of political manoeuvring on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite and of my hon. friend (Mr. Cowan) with reference to the principle of a Canadian navy, I do not know what word better than "mountebank" can describe that position. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this contention before the House at the present time and the consideration of this important question, originated where? It originated in the resolution of the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) a year ago. And what was it in favor of? It was not in favor of sending Dreadnoughts to Britain. Neither the member for North Toronto, nor the leader of the opposition, nor any member opposite said anything about that. It was in favor entirely and absolutely of the commencement and the formation of the nucleus of a navy in Canada. But, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Cowan) went further, and he contended that in the bill before the House the British North America Act, the constitution of this country, is infringed upon.

My hon. friend from Vancouver founded an argument, and declared upon the foundation of that argument the disloyalty of the government towards the constitution of this country; and yet he had not examined or understood this section of the bill of which he complained. The whole contention of my hon. friend is that the development by this country of its own land and naval forces has only one meaning, that is, that it is promited and intended to develop the independence of Canada apart from the British Empire. The development of this country, and its protection on land and on sea, are the greatest security that can be given to the British Empire today; and if the hon. gentlemen opposite twenty years ago had recognized, in any degree at all, the responsibility which they seek to have others recognize, and had done then exactly what this government is providing to do today, what position would Canada have been in to-day to send her fleets across the Atlantic to assist the Empire in any emergency that might arise on the other side?

But because they did nothing, and because things have to have a beginning, and because it takes time to promote them and bring them about, the whole blame is cast upon the present government. Hon. gentlemen opposite complain that very little is being done by the government, and yet in their very amendment they object to the enormity of the provisions already made. They say, you are making a tin-pot navy, and then they declare that the question is sufficiently important to have the opinion of the people of this country upon it before you carry out the project. I have no hesitation in saying, and I think I shall be able to prove to this House, that there never was a proposition placed before the parliament by the leaders of any great party, in view of the position that was taken by those leaders years ago, that represented such mixed and contrary opinions, while it is only intended to appease the fanatical wrath of hon. gentlemen belonging to their own party, but does nothing to establish the principles on which this country can be defended or can ever hope to be of any important assistance to the Motherland.

Reply to G. A. Cowan.

Coming from a maritime province, as I do, in fact, coming from the farthest western constituency in Canada, I think it is incumbent on me as a member of that particular district, to have a view on this question and to be prepared to put that view before this House. I wish to make a very important and very necessary correction to one argument advanced by my hon. friend from Vancouver last evening. He stated that perhaps the most mischievous and most insidious feature of the government bill was an attempt, a veiled and unpatriotic attempt, to change the relations of Canada to the Motherland. By section 15 of the British North America Act the commander in chief of all the armed forces in Canada is declared to continue to be vested in the Crown, and my hon. friend went on to explain that in his opinion the constitution of this country, section 15 of the British North America Act, was very seriously interfered with, and that the policy of the government presented to the House and to the country made no provision for retaining the authority of the Crown with regard to the operation of the naval or land forces of the Empire or of Canada. My hon. friend, by this argument, simply announced to the House that he had not read the bill before the House, for section 4 of the bill provides exactly according to the terms and the very words of section 15 of the British North America Act.

I shall read the two sections, because he attached such supreme importance to the position that he was taking. As a matter of fact, it appeared to those of us who listened to my hon. friend as if he had made a very important discovery. This matter had not been mentioned by any of the leading members of the opposition, and it did really appear from the attitude of my hon. friend that he had a very important discovery, and that the government, in providing for this policy, was actually destroying the constitution of Canada, and forever interfering with the harmony that ought to exist between Canada and the Motherland.

The section in the British North America Act to which he referred, reads:

"The command in chief of the land and naval militia and of all naval and military forces, of and in Canada, is hereby declared to continue and be vested in the King."

Or in the Crown, if you like. I shall now read the section in the bill before the House:

"The command in chief of the naval forces is vested in the King, and shall be exercised and administered by His Majesty, or by the Governor-General as his representative."

He concluded that this unconstitutional act was an evidence of the disposition of the government to bring about the breaking off of the alliance, that proper and reasonable and staunch alliance between this country and the Empire, and to lead this country out into the development of absolute independence and perhaps in the future absolute separation from the Empire. That is the attitude assumed by my hon. friend, and one of the evidences and the strongest evidence which he produced that the policy before the House showed such a disposition on the part of this government was the fact that in this bill they had failed to proviode for the carrying out of the terms of the British North America Act in regard to the authority of the Crown of the Empire, in the control of the naval and military forces of Britain and of this country. Thus, it is of tremendous importance that this matter should be brought to the attention of this Houses, and that the correction should be made.

Position in Case of War.

The next point, and about the only point of attack that my hon. friend made upon the policy of the government was in relation to the fact that in time of war it was necessary for the Governor in Council of this country to give instructions as to whether or not the naval or military forces should be sent to the protection of the British Empire. My hon. friend thought that was a very serious omission. I do not know exactly where he meant to place the responsibility, you have to have the responsibility somewhere. But my hon. friend's argument went to show the House and the country that the leading ministers of the Liberal party were not true to the traditions of the British Empire, were trying to develop an absolutely independent nationality, and his reasoning led him to the necessity of objecting to that provision in the act, whereby it is necessary for the Governor in Council to provide that the military or naval forces of this country should be sent to the aid of the Empire in case of war. I submit that the conclusion of my hon. friend was purely a political conclusion.

Mr. Cowan: Does the hon. gentleman propose to read section 4, without reading section 18, or does he read section 18 into section 4, and if the Governor can act what is the necessity of an order in council under section 18?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I am following my hon. friend's own argument. He complained last night that there was very serious danger in this country having to submit to the authority of the Governor in Council in case of hostilities occurring between Great Britain and any other nation, and he led up to that position by the announcement that he had no confidence in the leaders of this government, as he believed they tended to independence and separation. According to the conclusions of my hon. friend, he was deciding this question entirely on political grounds; because he had no confidence in the leaders of this government, he was afraid to depend upon them in such possible contingencies. I suppose my hon. friend would have no alarms at all if a Conservative government were in power. That is the answer to the whole position taken by my hon. friend. If his friends were in power, the Governor in Council would be all right and the Empire would be perfectly safe.

The thought struck me at that moment that even in that case my hon. friend could not be very confident, in view of the attitude of the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk), a very important person in the political party of my hon. friend, whom every one might reasonably expect would be a prominent member of a Conservative ministry. Therefore it struck me that my hon. friend could not entirely depend on the security of the Empire even if his own friends were in power. If there is any tendency to independence on the part of any minister of the Liberal government, it has been annulled by the denunciation of British diplomacy by the leader of the Conservative party from the province of Quebec; and under these circumstances it would be unreasonable for my hon. friend from Vancouver to expect to make the Empire secure by having as one of the principal ministers in a Conservative government the hon. member for Jacques Cartier.

Answer to Mr. Cowan.

My answer to my hon. friend is simple. As I said, he controverted two things in the policy of the government last night. He said that the government were destroying the constitution of this country—that the authority over the forces of this country was provided in the British North America Act to be vested in the King, whereas there was no provision in the bill of the government for such a condition? I have demonstrated to the House that in that my hon. friend is mistaken. The other position taken by my hon. friend was that if hostilities broke out between Britain and another country, it would be a serious thing to depend on the authority of the Governor in Council in this country, especially as it is constituted at the present time. Now, I am not contending against any legal interpretation that my hon. friend may put upon the bill, now that he is in cold blood and sober senses; but I am replying to statements made by my hon. friend when he was a little excited; and if his statements cannot bear cold criticism, that is not my fault. What I am doing is criticising what my hon. friend has said, and I am doing it without prejudice and without feeling, as I have nothing but the best feeling for my hon. friend; but on an important question like this, the decision of members of this House ought to be based on argument, not on excitement or emotion.

My hon. friend made a great deal of a statement of the Premier in his address, which he repeated to the very great amusement of the hon. gentlemen opposite. That was why I put myself out of order by making the remark I did. My hon. friend sought to contribute to the amusement of his friends in the House by trying to show how ridiculous was the simple statement of the Premier that when Britain was at war, Canada was at war, and if Britain were at war Canada might not be at war. Now, sir, the amusing thing to me was that a man would demonstrate the simplicity, and, if my hon. friend will excuse me, the vanity, of thinking that he could amuse or please his friends by a simple repetition of phrases. My hon. friend never attempted to analyse the statement of the Premier. It never occurred to him that after all there might be something in that statement. When the Premier made that statement, as a plain man, deducing plain facts from simple arguments, it was very easy for me at least to see that Britain might be at war without any necessity for Canada being at war. It does not follow that Britain may not in very many instances be engaged in hostilities at different parts of the Empire, none of which would be sufficiently important to necessitate calling in the aid of this country; and if I can understand the deductions of common sense, that is exactly what the Premier meant by the statement he made.

Three Principles.

Now, I want to ask the House to bear with me for a few minutes while I discuss the three principles which are before the House. We are called upon as members of this House to vote for one of three things; first, the policy of the government; second, the policy of the leader of the opposition; third, the policy of the member for Jacques Cartier. What were the circumstances that gave rise to the consideration of this question? How is it that suddenly, within a year, we are called upon to consider and determine the question of providing in this country for naval protection involving millions of dollars of expenditure? The condition arose from the fact that a year ago some strange emotion and excitement took possession of certain gentlemen in the Old Country and spread to kindred political spirits in this country, and that the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), becoming suddenly alarmed for the safety and security of the Empire, brought up a motion in this House for the discussion of this question. As the result of that discussion, the right hon. the Prime Minister proposed to amend the motion of the hon. member for North Toronto. My hon. friend, the leader of the opposition, made an arrangement, with the consent of his friends, whereby whatever resolution might be adopted at that particular time, should express the unanaminous feeling of both sides of the House. That, in my opinion, was an ideal condition to the consideration of a question of this importance affecting this country and the Empire at large.

The proposal suggested by the hon. member for Toronto was amended by the right hon. the leader of the government and again amended by a change suggested by the hon. the leader of the opposition, and the proposition in its final shape was unanimously agreed to. Where was the hon. member for Jacques Cartier at that particular moment? In view of the position he has since taken, in the discussion on this bill, what excuse has he to offer for his inertness and inaction on that occasion? He had nothing to say a year ago when this resolution was unanimously adopted, but no sooner did this government commit itself to a proposal to do something to strengthen the naval forces of the Empire than the hon. member for Jacques Cartier declares that he never believed there was anything in this excitement regarding the naval forces of Great Britain, that it was purely fictitious and had spread from the Old Country to Canada. But if that were his conviction, when was the proper time for him to have expressed it? I submit that it was when the hon. member for Toronto submitted his resolution, when that resolution was being discussed in this House; but the hon. gentleman, instead of doing this, left his seat and went out of the House and abandoned his duty, and he did this, although he was at the time convinced that an exciting condition had arisen in this country which was not based on facts. Then was the proper time for the hon. gentleman to have made the criticism which he made a year later, and in neglecting to do so, I charge him with having failed in his duty. But a year later, when this tremendous excitement was cooling off, and things were coming to a normal condition, was the time he chose to show his temper and his teeth to his own friends and dispute the methods taken by his own political colleagues, and to show his anxiety to protect the Empire by an amendment asking that the whole question be submitted to the votes and opinion of the people. I could not help being reminded of the old lines:

"When the devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;
"When the devil was well, the devil a monk was he."

The time for my hon. friend to have asserted his convictions and used his influence was at the beginning of the excitement, but he shirked his duty. The occasion for him to have corrected the wrong impression was just the one when he failed to do his duty.

A Word for F. D. Monk.

Just a word more about my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier. It is amusing to consider the position of my hon. friend in contrast with the speech of the hon. member for Vancouver. That hon. gentleman spoke for two hours last night, and during nine-tenths of that time he was facing the hon. member for Jacques Cartier. One could not help feeling that really his arguments, his influence and his declamation, were directed almost solely for the benefit of my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier. He kept steadily looking that hon. gentleman in the face, although using words that might, by a wave of the hond, be sent across to the government benches, still it seemed to me that the hon. gentleman was really saying: Those fellows are bad enough, but you are a long ways worse, and I consider you are really a more dangerous factor as opposed to the Empire than even are hon. members opposite.

The hon. member for Jacques Cartier expressed great dissatisfaction with British diplomacy. He went on to remind the House of a statement made by the right hon. the Prime Minister that if the supremacy of Britain on the sea should be weakened, the strength and integrity of Canada would be jeopardized, and expressed his dissent from that proposition. Then he proceeded to depreciate British diplomacy and the effects in Canada of that diplomacy. Well, I myself am a little jealous in favor of Britain and British diplomacy. I myself am an Englishman, just a few years in this country, but while I do not question the loyalty of Canadians to Britain, what I do say is this, that no man is in a position to doubt the wisdom of British diplomacy who refuses to spend a dollar for the protection of his own country. Britain has undoubtedly, in her diplomatic negotiations, to make compromises, but it must be remembered that she has to protect every country within the Empire, and all her diplomatic resources had to be exercised in favor of the Empire; and in my opinion any hon. member who—as my hon. friend did in a bitter speech—opposes the idea of Canada making any contribution or any effort in her own defence or that of the Empire is hardly in a position to question the effectiveness of British diplomacy.

Great Britain has had to make the best settlements she could. She has had to give as well as take. If her diplomatists insisted on taking every time, they would have had to fight every time. The hon. member for Jacques Cartier demands of the British diplomats only consideration of the interests of the Empire on every occasion, and yet he insists that not a man and not a dollar should be contributed by Canada in the defence of this country either by land or by sea. I submit that no argument has been presented by any member of this House so politically cowardly as that of the hon. member. If he was right in remembering the faults of British diplomacy he should have considered also the difficulties under which British diplomacy operated. I do not say that every negotiation in the past has been carried on to the best interests of the Empire, but I do say that the men who had the responsibility of carrying on these negotiations did the best they could in the interests of the Empire. And, if there is to be a reflection on British diplomacy, it ought to come from men who are willing to back their opinions with their own strength and their own money, and not from men such as a prominent leader of a great political party who reflects upon the diplomacy of the British authorities, and yet refuses to spend a dollar to protect his own rights.

Mr. Borden's Amendment.

Now, I dispose of the amendment of the hon. member for Jacques Cartier as being outside the practical politics of the Empire. For my hon. friend has placed himself outside the Empire in his discussion of this question. I come now to the amendment proposed by the leader of the opposition. That amendment contains two principles: First, that we should make a voluntary gift of a sufficient sum to build two Dreadnoughts, and do it immediately on the assumption that there is an immediate emergency; second, that the question of naval defence in Canada should be submitted to the consideration of the people of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the strongest speech that could be made against the amendment of the leader of the opposition to-day would be an accumulation of the expressions of the leader of the opposition and his friends just a year ago. Within the last few days, I have spent several hours reading these speeches, reading them in the light of the amendment which the lader of the opposition has now placed before you, and I propose to give some passages that have not been recited from the speches of such hon. members as the member for North Toronto, the leader of the opposition, the hon. member for North Grey (Mr. Middlebro), and my good friend from the city of Victoria—interested as he is—and I want to select a few very short passages (for I do not like to read extracts) to show that the arguments of these gentlemen a year ago are the strongest answers that could be offered to the present policy of the leader of the opposition in this House. If I want to find an argument in favor of a Canadian navy, I must go to the speeches of these hon. gentlemen a year ago; if I want to find an argument against making a contribution to Great Britain for Dredanoughts or anything else, I must go to the arguments of these gentlemen a year ago.

I take first the hon. member for North Toronto. As hon. members listened to his words, I ask them to keep in mind the policy of the leader of the opposition, and keep in mind also the somersault performed by the hon. member from North Toronto a few days ago in the debate on this bill—a political somersault that, I admit, was cleverly executed; no member of the party could execute such a "bout-face" as did my hon. friend. His contention eleven months ago was in favor of a contribution. Speaking of the thing to be considered, he said:

"The first thing is the policy of a fixed annual contribution in money to the British government or the British admiralty. Now, that divides itself, apparently, into two branches, but it is really the same thing. One man says: Send one million dollars or two million dollars a year; another man says: Send a Dreadnought or two Dreadnoughts, and so far as Canada is concerned, these two are absolutely one."

The present policy of the leader of the opposition is to send Dreadnoughts, but the member for North Toronto demonstrated that, so far as the principle of the thing is concerned, there is absolutely no difference to Canada.

"When we translate one contribution into Dreadnoughts it comes down in the end to money which would be sufficient to build and equip a Dreadnought. And, therefore, I say, they are both parts of the one proposition——"

Now, I would like the hon. member, and especially the hon. gentleman who is to follow me in this debate to remember this:

"—an annual fixed contribution of money to the British government for the purpose of national and imperial defence."

Weakness of Tory Position.

If that statement be correct, then this House has to consider not only the proposition of the leader of the opposition for two Dreadnoughts at the present time, but the more serious contingency of a repeated contribution to the British Empire which is involved in the principle necessarily and according to the hon. member for North Toronto himself. Let us get back to the foundation of this proposition. If we are not to have the establishment of a Canadian navy, if we are to remain in the Empire, if we are to make the contribution this year because we have not the necessary ships within the country to help the British Empire, and if, as hon. gentlemen say, we are not to have a Canadian navy, is it not logical to say that for all time to come, every time a little cry is raised, every time a possible contingency threatens in Great Britain, hon. members opposite will stand in favor of making direct contributions in cash from this country to the Empire? They cannot escape the necessary conclusion. That, sir, in my opinion, is the very weakness of their position. If the hon. gentleman had said: We will build a Canadian navy and we will make a contribution, that would have been a different proposition. But the hon. gentleman takes the position: We will not build a navy, but we will send a contribution. Sir, if you never begin to build a navy, you will never have one, and remain within the Empire, then you will for all time have to resort to a direct subscription of money by the people of this country.

The next proposal of the leader of the opposition is to submit the question of the establishment of a Canadian navy to the people. Well, I do not know what I would do under exactly similar circumstances as the hon. gentleman, but in contending for a principle I always try to put myself in the other fellow's place. But so far as I can see, if I had been the leader of the opposition, I would have reversed that proposition, I would have asked the people of Canada if they are willing to send a contribution of 20 or 25 millions to the Empire, but I would assume that I had a mandate from the people to take proper measures to defend their trade and their coasts. As I say, my hon. friend reversed that proposition, and says: We will send away the money of this country, over which we will have no control, and we will not ask the people for permission to do so.

Mr. Burrell: I would like to ask the hon. member if he considers there is an emergency, and if so, what does he propose to do?

Mr. Smith: I intend to make my own speech in my own way, and I will answer my hon. friend on the question of an emergency before I get through. I propose to go from one point to another in logical sequence; I do not depend upon a manuscript nor read an essay like my hon. friend. I have to use the logical faculty with which I am possessed, just as necessity arises, but I try to use it in a proper way. I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that the leader of the opposition assumes that he has a mandate from the people to make a money contribution, but he has no mandate to build ships, and shipyards, and dockyards, and develop a naval protection for Canada. I say that my hon. friend's proposition on the face of it is contrary to the principles of responsible government, and it cannot but confuse the public mind from its contradictory nature. Why, sir, it is evident to every one that my hon. friend's resolution was conceived for the purpose of consolidating conflicting element within his own party. One element of the oppositign says we ought to send a contribution equal to the value of two Dreadnoughts to meet a crisis, and the leader of the opposition had to provide for that feeling. Another man thought it would be a foolish thing to build a navy in Canada under any circumstances, and my hon. friend had to make some provision in his policy for that feeling. A third contingent thought that before building a navy in Canada we ought to consult the electors of this country as to whether we should do it or not, and my hon. friend had to make provision for that feeling. So there are three positively divergent principles that had to be worked into one symmetrical whole, and he endeavors to combine into one party different men of all these different temperaments. And so we have the simple expedient of the hon. gentleman's resolution to combine the conflicting elements among his own followers.

What Constitutes a Crisis?

Now, the proposition of giving two Dreadnoughts, or a contribution of money, to the British Empire is based on the assumption that there is a crisis. My hon. friend from Yale-Cariboo wanted to know what I proposed to do in case of a crisis. I will ask him another question. How are we to determine whether there is a crisis or not in Britain? By what process of reasoning are the members of this House to arrive at any assurance that there is a crisis at the seat of Empire? Because every member of this House will agree with me that we must not be carried ayay by every little wave of sentiment that comes along. The hon. member for Victoria and Haliburton (Colonel Hughes), and the hon. member for Vancouver could get up an excitement of that kind in 24 hours. Now, sir, if it should ever happen that hon. gentlemen opposite took the reins of government in this country, and if I myself became leader of the opposition, I can imagine that these hon. gentlemen would be wanting to send Dreadnoughts every 48 hours in order to meet an imagined emergency, and I would have to oppose them.

Now, I submit that the question of whether a crisis exists is to be determined by some reasonable process. The leader of the opposition said we must determine whether there is a crisis in Britain by the statements of responsible men in England. In that I agree with my hon. friend. But can my hon. friend, or any other man of this House, conclude that there is a crisis, or a serious danger, from the statements of responsible men in England? I may be asked, how is it that the Liberal government in England, for the last two years, and especially the last year, have been increasing the power of the British navy; and according to the dispatches received in this country yesterday, the speech from the Throne, at the meeting of the British parliament, asks for a further increase in the provision for strengthening the navy. Well, sir, I look upon all that as an evidence, not of a crisis, not of danger, but of a determination to secure absolute security. It is not an evidence that Britain is going to be interfered with by Germany, it is an evidence that neither Germany nor any other country will dare to interfere with the integrity of that great Empire.

The question as to whether there is a crisis should be decided by members of this House, in view of the policy, the statements and the actions of responsible ministers in the Old Country. I want to read one or two short extracts from the columns of one of the most responsible newspapers in England. As an Englishman I take a great interest in the press of that country, in the news which it publishes, and in the intelligent expression of public opinion which we may seek in its columns. Here is an article commenting on the present policy of the government, and of the leader of the opposition on the question now before the House. I think the House will agree that this is one of the most responsible newspapers published in the city of London, and the article from which I propose to quote discusses the very conditions that we are now considering to-day. The statements that this paper makes have an importast bearing upon this question. Let me read the article for the benefit of my hon. friend from Yale-Cariboo, who is alarmed about this crisis. I know that my hon. friend will appreciate the sentiments that come from the source that I am about to mention. I refer to the London Spctator for January 15th, 1910, which says:

"The conviction of the indivisibility of the Empire, which grows deeper and more earnest in the British dominions as time passes, and as one significant event gives place to another, was nobly expressed in the speeches of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mr. Borden on Wednesday, when a bill for creating a Canadian navy was introduced in the Canadian House of Commons. We have always maintained that the colonies ought not to be harassed into making contributions to the British navy; that and empire which is to have any reality cannot be maintained by pressure from the centre on the circumference, but must exist and flourish by the spontaneous desire of all the different parts to remain in a fixed relation to the mother country by accepting the implied obligations."

Let me read another passage from the same editorial:

"Last April it was reported that Victoria and New South Wales would combine to give a Dreadnought, but upon consideratinon they preferred not to divert any money from their policy—which has been under consideration for a good many years—of having an Australian navy. The decision of Canada was understood also to be in favor of a local navy, but nothing definite was known till Sir Wilfrid Laurier made his statement on Wednesday. The man would be ungrateful and unromantic, indeed, who could read without pride and intense appreciation the language in which the scheme was discussd, or without feeling convinced that, whatever vicissitudes may follow, a movement has been begun which is bound to go on from strength to strength. . . . It is quite impossible now that there should be any return on the part of Great Britain to the principle adopted by the imperial defence committee in 1906. The imperial defence committee then disapproved of the Australian proposal to maintain a local navy. It acted on the advice of the admiralty, which was to the effect that an efficient navy is one and indivisible, that small local navies with independent characteristics could not be readily absorbed into the royal navy in an emergency, and that the best assistance which the dominions could give the Mother Country would be regular contributions of money. Canada and Australia, in their different degrees, have rejected that advice; and though we quite see the logic of the admiralty point of view, we think on the whole that Canada and Australia have decided wisely. There are two chief objections to the policy of naval tributes. One is that the British taxpayer would be tempted to regard them as made in relief of his own pocket."

My hon. friend from Yale-Cariboo can appreciate that statement.

"He would forget that the co-operation of the colonies in naval defence is intended to make assurance doubly sure. The other is that the colonists themselves would take infinitely less interest in imperial defence if they simply put down sums of money to be spent invisibly in Great Britain, instead of having navies of their own taking shape under their eyes, manned by their own people, and perhaps built in their own yards."

I submit that as the soundest, the most intelligent and the most independent advice that has been given by any newspaper in Great Britain during the consideration of this question. With regard to the condition of excitement that is sought to be created, and with regard to an emergency contribution for Dreadnoughts I find this statement in another English paper:

"What is the 'emergency'? It is nothing more than the superheated six pence a word rant of a Socialist agitator, backed by the prestige of the greatest living journalistic acrobat and mountebank—chief press agent of the Unionist party—Lord Northcliffe.

"These two dangerous demagogues have played the strings of the war harp so clamorously and persistently, they have for political purposes so basely misrepresented the naval strength of England and exaggerated that of Germany, that half the nation believes Britain is in danger, and ex-

(Concluded on page 12.)

EE SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE EE

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