

Chamberlain. As the hon. member for Jacques Cartier says, Mr. Chamberlain referred to three main subjects that were to be discussed—the political relations, the military relations, and the commercial relations. So far as the political relations are concerned, he thought that we should allow matters to move very slowly indeed. As to the military relations, he thought the time had come when the colonies should tax themselves to contribute to the British army and navy. But in commercial matters, he thought that Great Britain could do nothing for the colonies unless the colonies should adopt a policy that, admittedly, it would be suicidal for them to adopt.

As I have said, the only resolution that was adopted, so far as political relations were concerned, was one in favor of a conference being held every fourth year between representatives of the colonies and of the British government. I may say at once that I have no objection to conferences being held when they are required. But I say that no Canadian statesman should leave the soil of Canada to represent the Canadian people in any assembly of that kind, without having previously stated clearly to the people of Canada what policy he was prepared to support, what propositions he was ready to make or to oppose. Before leaving Canada on such a mission, Canadian statesmen should have from this parliament a clear mandate to guide them, which should definitely point out what conduct they are to pursue. That is what was done last session by this government, that is what was done by the government of Australia on the last occasions; but unfortunately that was not done before the conference of 1897.

On the ground of military relations, the right hon. leader of the government stated this afternoon that propositions were made by the British government for contributions by the colonies in support of the army and navy. These propositions were strongly supported by the first Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Selborne, and by the Secretary of War, Mr. Brodrick. The Prime Minister of New Zealand supported Mr. Chamberlain on this occasion and moved two resolutions, found on pages 9 and 27 of the blue book, one referring to the army and the other to the navy. The reply of the Canadian government was exactly what was expected of it by the Canadian people. This afternoon we heard from the member for Haldimand (Mr. Thompson) the conclusion of that reply, and I will read to the House the first paragraph, which indicates still more clearly the position of the Canadian government:

The Canadian ministers regret that they have been unable to assent to the suggestions made by Lord Selborne respecting the navy, and by Mr. St. John Brodrick respecting the army. The ministers desire to point out that their objections arise, not so much from the expense involved, as from a belief that the acceptance

of the proposals would entail an important departure from the principle of colonial self-government. Canada values highly the measure of local independence which has been granted it from time to time by the imperial authorities, and which has been so productive of beneficial results, both as respects the material progress of the country and the strengthening of the ties that bind it to the motherland. But while, for these reasons, the Canadian ministers are obliged to withhold their assent to the propositions of the Admiralty and the War Office, they fully appreciate the duty of the Dominion, as it advances in population and wealth, to make more liberal outlays for those necessary preparations of self defence which every country has to assume and bear.

To this, Mr. Speaker, no Canadian has any objection to make. For my part I may say that as long as the Canadian government remains within the bounds fixed by themselves on this occasion, they will receive my hearty support. But the course is not yet clear. Every one knows that Mr. Chamberlain is not a man to abandon, upon the first repulse, any scheme upon which he has set his heart. Even recently, during his trip to South Africa where he went to enlighten himself upon some problems which, unfortunately for his country and the honor of the empire, he did not study some three or four years ago, he has thought proper to address what I may call a lesson of warning to the other self-governing colonies, stating that they must realize what their duties are. The Minister of Militia and Defence, since his return from the old country, has clearly stated upon two or three occasions what he thought the duty of Canada was in regard to defence. With the general tone of his argument I agree entirely. I would have no objection whatever to the Canadian government taking hold, for example, of the fortifications of Esquimaux and Halifax, and relieving the British government of the expense of defending those fortifications. I have no objection whatever, on the contrary I am desirous that the Minister of Militia and Defence should take steps to put the Canadian militia upon a proper footing, provided always that he sticks to the principle he has laid down himself that these preparations and this expense are made with the sole view of enabling Canadians to defend the soil of Canada. Well, Sir, in the very report we have here, in the paper which was presented to the conference from Col. Altham, Assistant Quartermaster General, we find these paragraphs.

In the event of war with the United States it is on this Canadian militia that must depend the entire safety of Canada until reinforcements arrive from England. It may, therefore, be concluded that the best way in which Canada can co-operate in imperial defence is by making her militia an efficient force. It is more important that the Canadian ministers should be strongly pressed to take this reasonable precaution than that they should maintain