

in saying it was his intention that we should deal with a matter of most vital importance to this country.

We also had the privilege of hearing three other speeches on this subject. I must apologize to the House for my failure to follow my honourable friend from Alma (Hon. Mr. Ballantyne). This was due to the fact that I lost my voice for a considerable time. I was quite willing to give way to the honourable member from Edmonton (Hon. Mr. Griesbach), of whose brilliant career and record during the War we are all proud, and to the honourable senator from Toronto (Hon. Mr. Macdonell), and the honourable senator from Vancouver (Hon. Mr. McRae), who also had most enviable records. We listened with pleasure to the remarks of these gentlemen while they discussed this important matter.

Now that I have an opportunity of following these distinguished gentlemen I feel that I am placed in a rather embarrassing position because of the fact that I have not had the experience of the honourable senator from Alma (Hon. Mr. Ballantyne), who, as a Privy Councillor of this country, was closely associated with naval matters during a serious time in our history, and because, by reason of my age, I was unable to take any part in the great adventure overseas from 1914 to 1918. Nevertheless, I think this is a time when all of us should do something or say something with regard to naval affairs in this country. In the light of my experience in politics and in business during the last forty years I think that in order to arrive at a proper conclusion I should take honourable members of the Senate back to certain events which occurred in this country in the past.

Perhaps our first venture with respect to the defence of the Empire, which we all love, was made in 1899, when England was compelled to take part in what was known as the Boer War. At that time the people and the Parliament of this country decided that we owed something to Great Britain, and consequently a contingent was sent from Canada to help the Mother Country in her struggle with the Boers in South Africa. A few years later, after several Imperial conferences had been held in London, the Government of the day, in which Sir Frederick Borden was Minister of Militia, introduced into Parliament a measure proposing that we should take over the defence of this country as far as we could; and in 1904 an Act was passed authorizing the upkeep and maintenance of the fortifications at Halifax and Esquimalt and the taking over of the naval dockyards at those two places.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: In 1910, was it not?

Hon. Mr. DUFF: The Act that authorized the taking over of the fortifications and the defences on both coasts was passed in 1904.

A few years later, after the British regiments had left this country and Canadian militiamen had taken charge, and subsequent to the Imperial Conference of 1908, it was felt that perhaps Canada should do even more towards defending her own coast-lines and assisting the British Empire. In 1909 Sir George Foster—that great statesman, now dead, who occupied a prominent place in this Chamber for many years—either because of his political acumen or because he had received a hint from somewhere that the then Government intended to do something with regard to the naval defence of this country, moved a resolution in the House of Commons on the 29th of March. Sir George, perhaps one of the most eloquent speakers this country has ever known, and a man who had the interest of the British Empire and of Canada at heart, feeling that it was the duty of all Canadians to stand by the British Empire, moved this resolution:

That in the opinion of this House, in view of her great and varied resources, of her geographical position and national environments, and of that spirit of self-help and self-respect which alone befits a strong and growing people, Canada should no longer delay in assuming her proper share of the responsibility and financial burden incident to the suitable protection of her exposed coast-line and great seaports.

In moving that splendid motion Sir George went on to say:

The first and greatest objection which I have to a fixed money contribution is that it bears the aspect of hiring somebody else to do what we ourselves ought to do; as though a man, the father of a family, in lusty health and strength, should pay his neighbour something per month for looking after the welfare and safety of his home instead of doing that duty himself. That seems to me, when you work it out, to be a basic objection to this form of aid. It goes still further than that. Suppose you contribute this year your sum, and next year your equal sum, and thereafter year after year. After ten or twelve, or twenty, or thirty years, you will have paid out an immense amount of money. You will have been protected in the meantime; but in Canada itself there will be no roots struck, there will be no residue left, there will be no preparation of the soil, or beginning of the growth of the product of defence. Yet some time or other, no one can doubt that with resources and with a population constantly increasing, we must and will have in this country a naval force of our own for our coast and home defence.

These were noble sentiments.