

THE SESSION OF PARLIAMENT.

THE fifth session of the present Parliament of Canada opened on February 4th. The Speech from the Throne was naturally confined altogether to the question of the War, and Canada's part in the struggle will of course be the most important business and will be given precedence over all other matters. The ordinary routine of public business, however, will be dealt with and it is therefore uncertain how long the session may continue.

The attitude of the Liberal Party in Parliament was clearly outlined at the outset of the session by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In his speech on the Address in reply to the Governor General's message, the Leader of the Opposition clearly and unhesitatingly renewed the pledge given at the special War Session last August, to support the Government in its war policy. At the same time he declared that it is expected that the Government will give a full statement and accounting of the expenditures made out of the \$50,000,000 war fund placed at their disposal last August. In this connection Sir Wilfrid made special reference to the public scandal regarding the boots furnished for the Canadian soldiers, drawing attention to the fact that the matter had been raised and discussed in the press of England and Canada and could not be overlooked by Parliament. Sir Wilfrid's speech contained an instructive and inspiring reference to the progress of the War, also a reference to publicly expressed views of Premier Borden regarding the relations between the Dominions and the Empire, which are reproduced herewith.

Pledge of Liberal Support.

"The speech from the Throne is confined altogether to the question of the War. Nothing else is mentioned in it. The speech simply says that:

My advisers will submit for your consideration measures rendered necessary by the participation of this Dominion in the great task which our Empire has undertaken in this War.

"Already there is on the Order Paper a motion by the Prime Minister to provide something like \$100,000,000 to that end. Let me say at once that we who sit on this side of the House and who represent His Majesty's Loyal Opposition took our course at the outset of hostilities when we declared that we would support the Government in their war policy. We conceived that it was our duty to do nothing to embarrass the Government, but on the contrary, to do everything in our power to facilitate the task, the heavy task, which had been placed in the hands of those to whom, for the time being, the Canadian people had entrusted their fortunes. We have acted upon this principle all along, and again we are prepared to act accordingly. We meet the summons of His Royal Highness in the same spirit to-day, in the month of February, as we met it in the month of August last. We are prepared to give to the Government, to those who for the moment have the confidence of the Canadian people under our constitutional system, the support to which they are entitled for the attainment of the great end which we all have in mind.

Entitled to full Statements.

"But whilst we are prepared to do nothing more than, perhaps, we should do, at the same time we are entitled to have from the Government a full statement of the expenditures which they have made out of the \$50,000,000 which was placed at their disposal last August. The Canadian people have been generous with their money; they continue to be generous with it; but whilst we are prepared to believe, as indeed we do believe, that mistakes have been made in the manner in which the money has been expended, that errors of judgment have been committed, of those mistakes and of those errors of judgment we are not disposed to be critical.

It would be hardly possible to expect that in the case of the expenditure of some fifty million dollars no mistakes would arise; it is perhaps more than we can expect from human nature; but we cannot close our eyes to the fact that not only have mistakes been made, but frauds have been committed which have resulted in injury to the health of our troops, and impairment of their efficiency. These frauds have been regarded as so gross and so criminal that the Minister of Militia himself, not more than two or three weeks ago, stated, not once but three or four times at different places in the country, that if he knew the man who supplied the boots which have been the cause of so much disease, and sickness, and suffering to our soldiers on the plains of Salisbury, that man would deserve to be shot. The honour of the minister is at stake, and so is the credit of the country."

Responsibility Must be Placed.

"It is not impossible to discover the responsible parties. Up to the present the minister is responsible, and it is for him to take the necessary measures to vindicate himself. We have been told that a commission of three members has been appointed by the Government to investigate this particular matter, and not later than ten or twelve days ago it was stated that the minister himself, not satisfied with this inquiry, had instituted a departmental investigation to ascertain the true facts. I do not know if this is all that is intended to be done by the Government; but let me say that the fullest light should be thrown upon this matter, so that the people of Canada may know where the responsibility lies. No member on this side of the House intends to be critical, and for my part I certainly have no such intention; but assuredly we are all gravely concerned that the health and comfort of those brave men who are risking their lives in the cause of the Empire shall have every protection that we can afford. I would say to my Hon. friend, the Minister of Militia, were he in his seat, that in certain quarters the blame is cast upon him. It is said that the fact that the boots which were supplied to the troops were not what they ought to have been, is not the fault of the workmanship or of the material supplied, but the fault of the specifications furnished to the manufacturers."