

a whole had never considered the communication which was sent to the government of Canada and which was published broadcast in the press at that time. Not only the British cabinet as a whole had not considered that appeal, but leading members of the government and leading public men in England took the position that it was one of the most dangerous appeals that had ever been made by any government in any part of the world. More than that, we were told that but for the action of Canada in taking the position which she did at that time in asking that the facts be first brought out and that the parliament of Canada should have its say before contingents were sent abroad, a second great European conflict might have taken place.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Some hon. gentlemen opposite question that statement; let me give them my authority for what I say. I thought that point had come to be generally conceded, but if hon. gentlemen opposite are in any doubt I will give them the words of one of two British statesmen of whose verdict I think they will approve. I intend to quote two gentlemen, each of whom has been prime minister of Great Britain, each of whom has passed away, but each of whom though being dead, yet speaks to us through his utterances as recorded. What were the words of the late Andrew Bonar Law, who if I recall correctly was a member of that very administration? I quote from an English newspaper, the Newcastle Journal of November 8, 1922, in which reference is made to a speech by the late Mr. Bonar Law. These are his words in regard to the so-called Chanak incident, and with respect to the communication sent at the time to the dominions:

Towards the end of September a manifesto suddenly appeared in the newspapers. I read it with amazement. There was no consultation with the dominions, and this extraordinary manifesto was issued with the knowledge of three or four members only of the cabinet.

To suddenly throw, as a bolt from the blue, this appeal for help when not one of the dominions had the remotest idea that there was any idea of it, and when it was well known that their help could not come in time to be of any assistance in the crisis, was to risk, in my opinion one of the greatest assets of this empire. It was to take a risk with our dominions which no wise man would have taken, and which, I think, was not more foolish than it was wrong.

Then I have here the words of the late Lord Oxford and Asquith. What did he say, as reported in a Canadian Press cable to Canada

of October 8, 1922, and which appeared in most of our daily papers? This report of his speech at Dumfries on the evening of October 7th, 1922, reads as follows:

"There is every reason to believe," said Mr. Asquith, "that a week ago to-day this country, single-handed, was on the brink of an unnecessary war."

Then referring to the manifesto he said:

"All this strident rhetoric, this flag-waving and bugle-blowing, were wholly inexplicable unless the prospect of war, at any rate, was well in sight."

Mr. Asquith said he could not remember a more ill-timed and discreditable incident in the whole of his public life. The effect was what might have been expected: The French and Italians, who were holding the neutral lines with the British, were withdrawn.

"In our great dominions," said Mr. Asquith, "were statesmen sagacious enough—let us be thankful for it—before they committed their countries to war, who required more information as to what they would be fighting for and as to how and why it had become necessary to fight at all."

May I remind the house that at the time that statement was made, Australia and New Zealand had each signified their intention of sending forces to join with the British forces in the event of war, and that Canada stood out alone in seeking information and asking that her parliament be advised before the people of this country were committed to participation in another war. I quote further from the report as follows:

Referring to the question of the freedom of the straits, Mr. Asquith said the Black sea powers, particularly Russia, had just as much concern therein as Great Britain had. Moreover, the Kemalists themselves declared they were quite willing to accept the principle of the freedom of the straits. He said he saw no reason why they should not mean what they say. "What an issue that would have been to let loose the hazard of the horrors of war," Mr. Asquith exclaimed.

"Let no one be simple minded enough," said Mr. Asquith, "to suppose that the hostilities would have been confined to Chanak. Such a war would probably have involved the greater part of the Asiatic continent nearest Mesopotamia and Palestine, and possibly Egypt and other countries, with the possibility of an infinite repercussion throughout the Moslem world."

Then may I give to my hon. friends opposite the opinion of one who I think was well informed at the time, but who no one for a moment will say is an advocate of the present administration, much less of myself. I refer to Lieut.-Colonel John Bayne Maclean, of MacLean's Magazine. What did that paper have to say with reference to this matter? Colonel Maclean, the editor, under his own name, in the issue of MacLean's

W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

Speeches-1922 - 1932

PUBLIC ARCHIVES
ARCHIVES PUBLIQUES
CANADA