

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I cannot say as to that. He was here repeatedly urging upon us the desirability of laying claim to this island. As a matter of fact at one time he wanted us to assure him of a lease for the island but whether or not he approached us for assistance for the second expedition I am unable to say. I have a very clear recollection that he repeatedly told me that there was no danger with respect to the lives of these young men—that they could live off the island.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I have not the slightest doubt he said that to the minister for I know that is the doctrine he is always preaching, he preaches it in his books, but the point is this: the expedition of 1922 was, as I understand it from the minister's statement, solely a relief expedition. It was not organized, even in part, for the purpose of establishing British suzerainty over the island. It had nothing to do with that purpose at all, it was purely for relief.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I may say that the feeling of the government here was that if the British government wanted the island, why, all right; but so far as the Canadian government were concerned we were not going to lay any specific claim to the island. Stefansson pleaded poverty in 1922 and the difficulty of reaching the island, and naturally we felt that it was a wise thing that a ship should get there in some way or another, and see whether these young men were on the island or not. However, that expedition failed. I cannot recollect whether he approached us in 1923 for any assistance to reach the island.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I heartily endorse the conduct of the government in giving assistance for the purpose of relieving the possible, and I would have thought, the most probable, plight of these young men on Wrangel island, but my criticism would be this: the government's concern was not sufficient, it should have been more, and in donating the money care should have been taken to see that the boat, the personnel, and the provisioning were such as were likely to achieve the desired object. I do not think the expedition should have been left merely as a sort of personal enterprise. Here was a Canadian expedition, unauthorized it is true, for the purpose of establishing British suzerainty over a certain island. Nevertheless it was understood as a distinctly Canadian expedition from the beginning.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I do not think my right hon. friend has placed the proper construction upon the enterprise. It was not Canadian. It was clearly intimated, and the memorandum points out with equal clearness, that it was a British and not Canadian enterprise. Crawford's father makes it very clear in his letter, that he and his son were induced to go because the expedition was going for the purpose of claiming Wrangel island for Great Britain, not for Canada—

Mr. MEIGHEN: Oh yes, I know.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): —and the ship did not start from a Canadian port.

Mr. MEIGHEN: When it is claimed for Great Britain it is claimed, of course, for the British Empire, but my point is this: that whatever they may have purposed to do—even although they purposed to claim the island for Britain as distinct from Canada; which they did not, but even if they did—the expedition itself was Canadian. It was a Canadian who got it up.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): No, no. Stefansson is not a Canadian is he?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Of course.

Mr. FORKE: He is sometimes one and sometimes the other.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Stefansson is a citizen of Canada, surely the minister does not dispute that?

Mr. FORKE: He was born in Gimli, in Selkirk.

Mr. MEIGHEN: He went down to Dakota and lived there a while and afterwards lived here.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Did he not take American citizenship at that time?

Mr. MEIGHEN: I could not say. If he did he lost it again. Stefansson is a Canadian.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): He was born Canadian but my understanding was that he had taken out American citizenship.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I never heard that. If he did he must have re-established his Canadian citizenship. Stefansson is a Canadian; I do not think any one can dispute that.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): It is disputed.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Is it?