

financially in a position to ask the Canadian people to vote, through their representatives in parliament, another 14 millions for national defence, that there is not such an immediate threat of invasion, and that our geographical position protects us somehow against any ambitions on the part of other nations. Mr. Speaker, I share these last views and I shall vote against the increase in the defence estimates.

We hear some people say: Of course, if an increase of a few millions to make our army more up to date and more efficient amounted to a declaration of war, or if it were likely to lead us to war, we would be the first to vote against it; but let us hope that we would be consistent enough not to give a vote of confidence in the government immediately after voting against an increase in the defence estimates. Mr. Speaker, since when does the Liberal platform consist exclusively in a plan of national defence? Why would it be inconsistent to vote confidence in the government, and at the same time to vote against the increase of military estimates only?

The Liberals have never known of any bondage within the ranks of their party, and Canadian Liberalism owes its strength to the fact that it has no limitations of any kind. All the honourable members are, as I am myself, opposed to participation in foreign wars, but should war break out to-morrow and the empire be involved in it, they cannot tell in advance that Canada would not follow the same course as in 1914. Unforeseen circumstances will again cause the boundaries of Canada to be shifted perhaps beyond Flanders.

Let me quote a statement made on the 5th instant by Sir Samuel Hoare, first lord of the admiralty, as reported by the Canadian Press:

Speaking at a dinner of the Bradford chamber of commerce, Sir Samuel stated the sister states of the empire would find any system of isolated local defence extravagant and inefficient.

I shall quote at once a few comments by Sir Wilfrid Laurier upon the Guthrie amendment to Bill No. 21, introduced during the 1912-1913 session, by Sir Robert Borden, prime minister. On page 7232 of Hansard, Sir Wilfrid is reported as having said:

I now come to a consideration of the fact, made manifest by one of the last speeches of Mr. Churchill, that the admiralty favours contribution and not autonomous organization. This is not a new thing: the British admiralty has always preferred a system of imperial contribution to the idea of autonomous organization. At the imperial conference in 1902, Lord Selborne, the predecessor of Mr. Churchill, made a proposal that we should have imperial contributions.

In 1902, in 1912, in 1937, the outstanding men who have successively discharged the duties of first lord of the British Admiralty took an entirely similar view. Sir Robert Borden shared this opinion and requested the House of Commons to vote 35 million dollars as a contribution to the naval forces of the empire. Laurier had gone down to defeat on the navy issue and he, a Liberal who believed in expenditures for this country's own defence, put up a stout fight for the triumph of his views. And we saw men who had fiercely opposed him in Quebec, we saw erstwhile nationalists turn Conservatives overnight and vote for the policy of a contribution to the empire. That was not Laurier's policy, and that is not, it seems to me, the present government's policy.

On August 4, 1914, war broke out. What did Canada do? Even those who had helped to defeat Laurier forgot their speeches on behalf of the Canadian homeland, even prominent supporters of Laurier forsook him in order to join the Union government and vote for war.

In spite of the oft-repeated assurance that national service registration would not lead to conscription, compulsory military service was established here, (I don't say that in the house) What happened, sir?

To-day, trustworthy men are governing Canada. Their policy is Canadian, as was Laurier's policy, but nevertheless Canadian blood was shed in Flanders. A country with a population of 10 million inhabitants, overcome by war fever and imperialistic enthusiasm, raised within a few months a large army. Public men who had unflinchingly opposed our participation in foreign wars voted for the dispatch of troops to help the empire. Circumstances were beyond human control, events were compelling men to act against their own will and Canada became involved in a foreign war. Such sacrifices were made by an unprepared country.

The vote we are called upon to give on the increase in our military estimates is one that expands not only our defensive power, but also our contributing capacity whenever the alarm is raised. And should the same thing happen, should events compel our leaders to act against their own will, it would be too late then to oppose armaments and to make known our refusal to participate in a foreign war in which the empire would be involved. It would be too late then to prevent war preparations and in the excitement that seizes a people in time of war, we would hear again the words: "Aye, Aye, ready."