

The Naval Question

Editor's Note:—At the request of Mr. Chas. Lunn of Ituna, Sask., we are publishing herewith some correspondence between himself and Sir Wilfrid Laurier on the Naval Question. In publishing these letters we are not inviting a controversy on the subject and will not denote space to such a controversy. There are several opinions on the matter, but there can hardly be more than one opinion on the desirability of giving the taxpayers a referendum on the naval question. These letters show both sides of the question, and are interesting from that standpoint. We believe our readers will do their own thinking, and we leave the following to them:

The Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier,
Ottawa.

Dear Sir Wilfrid,

I write as one of your most loyal supporters in the past and as a dyed-in-the-wood Liberal and vice-president of the Ituna Liberal Association in respect to your policy of building a Canadian navy. In the first place, I feel quite convinced that your intentions are good and that you conscientiously desire the welfare of the Dominion in every way, and at the same time I feel just as certainly convinced that your policy is wrong and that it will introduce what will eventually be a very dangerous element to our beloved land.

As a Britisher, I feel perfectly safe as we are, defended and protected by the best and most powerful navy in the world, and that is destined, by British pluck and energy and determination, to keep well ahead of any other navy that is being, or ever can be, constructed. My motto has always been and I believe always will be, "One King, One Empire, One Fleet and One Flag."

All our other colonies and dependencies are satisfied as they are, and to offer to support our present navy with contributions towards its expenses and development, and I can see no valid reason why Canada should not do the same. As we all know, we have enjoyed peace and prosperity under her protection, without money and without price to ourselves, and so we, out of gratitude for past favors, and blessings, owe it to ourselves to strengthen and protect our protector in every way possible, and not by trying to build a rival navy to show our independence of what I believe we can never be independent of.

I could say a good deal more but do not wish to weary you, and will only add that if you persist in following the policy of building a Canadian navy, we shall get into even a worse position than we are in, through our policy of bounties to the iron and steel industries which, as you well know, entail us in an expenditure of many millions of dollars annually.

With these views, I cannot, of course, continue to support your government, and shall, in season and out of season, condemn your naval policy and feel sure that it will spell disaster to our party.

Trusting you will abandon such a tremendously perilous course and with kindest regards, beg to remain, dear Sir Wilfrid,

Yours most sincerely,
(Sgt.) CHAS. LUNN,
Ituna, Sask., Feb. 28, '10.

Sir Wilfrid's Reply
Ottawa, March 5, 1910.

My Dear Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 28th February. I have no observations to offer as to your opinion of our naval policy. I would be sorry on this or any other question that any member of the party should not be free to follow his own convictions.

Let me observe to you, however, that you are altogether in the wrong as to the facts upon which you base your conclusions. You say that all of the colonies and dependencies are satisfied to remain as they are, and to offer to support our present navy with contributions towards its expenses and development, and you see no valid reason why Canada should not do the same. I grant you that such was the policy of the other colonies in the past, but that a change is now taking place in this respect. Australia is building a navy of her own. She used to contribute to the Imperial navy; now she has ceased her contribution and is using the money for the construction of an Australian fleet, and, indeed, she receives for that end a contribution from the Imperial parliament. You see, therefore, that the position is absolutely reversed.

New Zealand is not building a navy of her own yet, but she has stipulated that the Dreadnought which she has supplied to the Imperial navy shall be stationed in the Chinese waters and that the accessory ship shall be stationed in her own waters. In this again, there is a marked alteration in the policy of New Zealand.

With all due respect to your convictions, I persist in my own, and if you only think over the subject again, you will come to the conclusion that a country with a population of 7,000,000, as Canada now has, can no more exist without some navy and some militia, than can a city of fifty thousand souls exist without police protection.

Yours very sincerely,
(Sgt.) WILFRID LAURIER.

Mr. Lunn Writes Again
Jasmin, Sask., March 19, '10.
The Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier,
Ottawa.

Dear Sir Wilfrid,

I thank you for your kind reply of 5th inst. to my letter re your naval policy, and all I wish to do is to express what I feel in regard to the matter, as with me it looks so different from what it appears to do to you.

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