

## Dundonald's Indiscretions and Disobedience.

Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier (Prime Minister). Mr. Speaker, the defence which we heard yesterday from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Fisher) against the charges contained in the motion in your hands was so full, so complete and so masterly that there was no need for any of his friends to interfere in this debate. Nothing could be added to what had been said when he sat down. And, if I rise in this debate it is not at all to follow the line of argument that has been pursued; it is to call the attention of the House to the closing paragraph of the motion of my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden). The words to which I wish to call attention are especially these:

The House regrets that this unwarrantable interference has been approved by the Government, and that it not only has unduly delayed the organization of the regiment, but has culminated in depriving the Militia of Canada of an experienced and distinguished Commanding Officer.

"Has culminated in depriving the militia of Canada of an experienced and distinguished officer." Here is a statement which is not warranted by anything which has been proved to this House. The motion is an indictment against the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture joined issue upon it with his accusers. He has traversed it, in every particular; and I submit to the impartial judgment of those who heard him, that he has cleared himself completely of the accusations and insinuations brought against him. Even if the charges here asserted were true, there is no justification and no reason for saying that the action of the Minister of Agriculture, even if proven, was the cause why Canada has been deprived of the services of an experienced and distinguished commanding officer. For my hon. friend the Minister of Agriculture, in the speech which he delivered yesterday, showed conclusively to the House that nothing which he may have done was conducive to the retirement of the General Officer Commanding; he stated and proved, that for several weeks before, it had been the determination of Lord Dundonald to retire from the post which he has occupied for two years. My hon. friend gave the evidence, but I think it will not be amiss if I repeat, in one particular, the case which he made. I have here the statement delivered to the press by Lord Dundonald, which has been, not improperly, I think, characterized as a manifesto. Speaking, as he says, of the impediments put in his way by the Department of Militia, and of the many things done to mar his work, Lord Dundonald tells the people of Canada that he had come to the conclusion that he would sever his connection with the department. These are his words:

### Dundonald Intended to Resign.

It seemed to me that the best way to help the militia of Canada was to let day-light into the working of the system.

I realized, moreover, that the new Militia Bill would soon be discussed in Parliament, and that it was my duty to give a warning of certain dangers before it was too late.

I might have lodged an official protest with the Government. I cannot see that this would have been of any avail. It would have been simply one more document in a pigeon hole.

A course offering many attractions was to resign and issue a public statement giving my reasons. So far as I personally was concerned it would have been by far the easier and more pleasant course. The objection was that, by so doing, I would give neither the Government nor the people of Canada any real opportunity to pass judgment upon the matter brought to their attention. My protest would have been made, it is true, but not in a manner that would have attracted attention to the evil.

It seemed better to make a public protest and to leave with the Government the option of heeding it, or of upholding the system which is destructive to the efficiency of the national defence.