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April 26, 1916



## Our Ottawa Letter

Sir Sam Hughes' Statement in the House—Calls Kyte Charges "Piffle"—  
Borden Administering Militia Department—Foster Proposes Trade  
Development Scheme.

(By The Guide Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, April 20.—The parliamentary week has been short, but eventful. The house adjourned on Wednesday until Tuesday next, in order to give members an opportunity to go home for Easter. The three days preceding the commencement of the holiday were days of keen excitement. The return of Sir Sam Hughes, minister of militia, and his defence of his connection with the fuse contracts was the cause. From the time of his arrival on Sunday afternoon, when he was welcomed by a large number of friends, the majority of them in uniform, until he spoke on Tuesday afternoon, there was ceaseless speculation as to what he would say. When the minister had his say there was just as much excitement and speculation as to its ultimate effect on the course of events.

To the public generally the most interesting development in connection with the minister of militia's defence was his statement that, pending the conclusion of the inquiry by the Royal commission, he had asked Premier Borden to administer the affairs of his department. Sir Robert Borden subsequently confirmed this statement. As to why it was necessary for the prime minister to assume this responsibility in addition to his other admittedly heavy duties there is a great deal of wonder. The story most generally accepted at the capital is that the prime minister had promised a group of his followers that Sir Sam would not be permitted to resume control of his department until he was cleared of any suspicion of wrongdoing in connection with the Kyte charges. But when Sir Sam arrived in New York he told the press correspondents that he proposed to go to the capital, take charge of the department and make a statement to parliament. On Monday morning Sir Sam did go to the department, and he was there again on Tuesday morning when, report says, he received a visit from the prime minister. Sir Sam objected to any of his colleagues invading his domain, and the matter was compromised by Sir Robert himself agreeing to take charge. It will be recalled that Premier Asquith replaced Col. Seeley in the British war office when the latter resigned over the Carragh camp incident.

Today there is plenty of speculation as to the likelihood of the minister of militia ever again assuming control of the department. His enemies on both sides of the house say that he is not likely to, while his friends just as vehemently declare that it is only a matter of time before he is fully reinstated. The "neutrals" in the quarrel say it all depends on what comes out. There are comparatively few in any of the various camps of public opinion who believe that Sir Sam will be found guilty of personal wrongdoing, but the number who think that it is likely to be established that careless and imprudent contracts were entered into is large, and this impression may have been lessened to some extent by the statement made in the house by the minister.

Before Sir Sam arrived in New York it was announced that he had engaged three of the most eminent lawyers in Canada for his defence. They were: Hon. Wallace Nesbitt, K.C.; J. N. Ewart, K.C., and Eugene Lafleur, K.C. When he landed he was met by Mr. Nesbitt, who succeeded in preventing the minister from saying much to the galaxy of press correspondents who were on hand to meet him and who expected to get some good copy. The minister was still "sealed up," as far as the press was concerned, when he arrived in the capital. It was assumed that he would be advised by his lawyers to make a brief statement to parliament. Undoubtedly he did get such advice, but when the house met on Tuesday he had once more taken the bit into his teeth and spoke for over an hour to a crowded house and packed galleries. While speaking in a more subdued manner than is usual by his custom, Sir Sam had occasional

flashes of his accustomed vigor, while at other times he spoke with evident signs of emotion. In the beginning he struck out at the opposition by intimating that he had been led to believe before his departure for England that nothing would be brought up affecting him during his absence. The basis for this statement appeared to be a state-

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