

up my Estimates I moved and got the unanimous consent of the committee to consider this item of \$1,700,000 in the Supplementary Estimates in conjunction with the item of \$300,000 in the Main Estimates.

Mr. FIELDING: It doesn't make any difference.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I just wish to say a word or two as to the reasons why I am opposed to this item in the Supplementary Estimates, and why I am going to support the amendment offered by the leader of the Opposition. My objections to this item are the same objections that I made the other night to the increase in the Militia Estimates, and I feel it is not necessary for me to formulate the same reasons again on this occasion. My hon. friend from East Lambton (Mr. Armstrong), while my hon. friend from Maisonneuve (Mr. Lemieux) was speaking asked why the Government discarded the naval law which had been adopted in 1910. I think I am in a position to tell him why they did. I have in my hand the Hansard of the session of 1911-1912, containing statements made by the ministers of the then Government, which will give my hon. friend the answer he is asking for. The hon. Minister of Marine and Fisheries of that day, hon. Mr. Hazen said (Hansard of that day, hon. Mr. Hazen said (Hansard page 5303):

I may say pending the declaration of what the policy of this Government will be touching the naval service—which, as my hon. friends know, the Prime Minister announced in the debate on the Address would not be determined until after full opportunity was had of considering the whole question and of first consulting with the Admiralty authorities in the matter—it has been thought better that the Estimates this year should be based on the idea of maintaining the existing ships and the existing establishments, including the Naval College at Halifax, on a proper basis, without adding new ships or adding to the equipment we have at the present time more than is necessary for the purpose of maintaining it in proper condition. It is on that basis entirely that the Estimates are made up this year.

The Postmaster General of that day, Hon. Mr. Pelletier, said—Hansard page 5314:

I may tell him further that that vote (the vote in the Estimates of 1912) is absolutely logical and consistent with the policy of the Conservative party. When we came into power we found certain conditions existing; we found that a naval college had been built at Halifax and that two ships had been purchased. Does the right hon. gentleman mean to say that we should have set fire to that college and sunk those two ships? It is true that one of them had met with a bad accident on a certain trip down in Yarmouth, but nevertheless, we found her there with the other ships, both belonging to Canada.

Further on, he said:

We had under the circumstances to continue what the late Government had put into operation. It would have been ridiculous, even for those so-called bad Nationalists in Quebec, without one moment of consideration, to close the naval college and give the ships to some other country. That would not be reasonable.

All the members of the Government of that day said that of course they had to keep the Rainbow and the Niobe, but that they would take great care not to add any other new ships to those two relics they had received from the previous administration. In 1913 the same thing was said. Here is what a very prominent gentleman (Sir Robert Borden) who was Prime Minister of that day and is Prime Minister still said at the same session—Hansard, page 5355:

It is for that reason that we thought the late Government were wrong in proposing such a policy, and that they did not go to the very heart of the matter; and that before we entered into any arrangement of that kind we must know where we were standing within this Empire. So, we propose that the naval policy of the late Government should not be continued, and we do propose before any naval policy is entered upon that some of those matters shall be considered and when that policy is brought down it shall be presented to Parliament, and the people of this country shall be given an opportunity to pronounce upon it.

So the right hon. gentleman, who was leader of the Government, said that the reason why Canada could not go on with the naval policy of the late Government was, first, that we did not know at that time where we were standing within the Empire, and, secondly, that before entering upon any permanent policy it should be first submitted to the people of this country. Those two reasons hold good to-day. We do not know any more clearly where we stand within the Empire, especially on the eve of an Imperial Conference, at which the status of Canada and of all the British Dominions is going to be considered, discussed and decided upon, and at which the question of the naval defence of the Empire is going to be discussed. I ask you, Mr. Chairman, what is the cause of all this haste? Why should we take those ships to-day?

Why should we, having declared that we have no policy, enter upon an undertaking which is really a policy? The Prime Minister pledged the Government at that time that nothing further would be done without the people of Canada having an opportunity to pass upon it. Surely no hon. gentleman would say that the people of Canada have pronounced upon the new policy instigated by the Minister of Naval affairs. The elections of 1917 were certain-