

members on that side of the House thought it opportune and we on this side of the House all thought it inopportune. Be this as it may, it is not worth while having any discussion on this point, why the motion was not moved at the first opportunity. The fact is that it was not moved for two months until the 29th of March. At that time the atmosphere had become very much charged with electricity. A debate on the condition of the British navy had taken place in the Imperial House of Commons; attention had been directed to the armament going on in Germany, and the news had been flashed across the ocean that New Zealand had made an offer of a Dreadnought to the Imperial government. Then it was that for the first time we heard in this House the suggestion of an offer of a contribution to the Imperial navy. That suggestion came from my hon. friend from North Toronto, but it came in a very mild and tentative manner. I will give in the House the very language my hon. friend used on that occasion. This is how he spoke:

"Today peril stands at the gateway. It is not for me to say how great it is, but I run and brush it aside. Today it impresses itself upon the greatest statesmen of the old country; to-day it appeals to Australia until public subscriptions are taken, and the government is being impurposed to do even more than its settled policy to meet the emergency; to-day little New Zealand gives one Dreadnought and offers a second, and to-day Canada faces that position of peril and emergency. Let me say to my right hon. friend, that if after careful consideration he proposes to this parliament a means for meeting that emergency adequately, now and as it should be, whether it be by the gift of Dreadnoughts or the gift of money of this country, this side of the House will stand beside him, and stand for Canada in supporting that measure."

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. This was not very effective language coming from my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster); it was not as lucid as his sentences generally are. I do not think he had yet found his sea legs. My hon. friend spoke rather tentatively, simply suggesting a contribution, and adding that if we proposed it he would agree. We did not think it was advisable to depart from the policy we had laid down. We said that we would maintain the position we had taken, and after some consideration the House agreed by a unanimous resolution upon the line of our policy of 1902, and in order that there may be no misgivings or misunderstandings upon that, in view of the cheers from the other side a moment ago, I shall once again read this motion:

"This House fully recognizes the duty of the people of Canada, as they increase in numbers and wealth, to assume in larger measure the responsibilities of national defence."

The House is of opinion that under the present constitutional relations between the mother country and the self-governing dominions, the payment of regular and periodical contributions to the Imperial treasury for naval and military purposes would not so far as Canada is concerned, be the most satisfactory solution of the question of defence.

The House will cordially approve of any necessary expenditure designed to promote the speedy organization of a Canadian naval service in cooperation with and in close relation to the Imperial navy, along the lines suggested by the admiralty at the last Imperial conference, and in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Britain is essential to the security of commerce, the safety of the empire and the peace of the world.

The Houses expresses its firm conviction that whenever the need arises the Canadian people will be found ready and willing to make any sacrifice that is required to give to the Imperial authorities the most loyal and hearty cooperation in every movement for the maintenance of the integrity and honour of the empire."

When this resolution was moved, and accepted by a unanimous vote, we believed that it would be binding upon the other side of the House as it is binding upon this side, but in this we made a mistake. We supposed when this resolution had been solemnly adopted, gentlemen on the other side of the House who had given their assent would at least have the small merit of consistency, but in this we were deceived. It never entered our minds that men on the other side of the House would go back on the position they had solemnly recorded. In this again we made a mistake. We paid them too great a compliment. The session had hardly closed when the terms of this resolution were attacked and challenged by gentlemen who had voted for it, attacked in the press, attacked in conversation with reporters, attacked on the public platform. Thus the summer went on, everybody, almost, on the other side spoke upon this resolution, discussed it and controverted it. The leader spoke, his first lieutenant spoke, the rank and file spoke, and they all spoke together and all spoke differently, their fiddles were singularly out of tune.

This was the condition of things when this House met on the eleventh of November and we were the witnesses of a curious spectacle. The men who had been so loquacious during the recess suddenly became dumb, the men who had discussed and de-