

of the Imperial conference convened to discuss military affairs at the War Office. That conference was held on the 14th and 17th days of June, 1911, and my right hon. friend is quite right in saying that he did lay the report of that conference on the table of the House on the day mentioned. But, if the right hon. gentleman will observe what I said on the 7th day of April, he will find that I was not alluding to that. I will read my remarks on that occasion, and I think I shall give the right hon. gentleman convincing proof that my statement was absolutely correct in every respect. I said on the 7th of April:

As I understand it, the right hon. gentleman himself agreed that Canada ought to be represented on the Imperial Defence Committee, and further than that—although I did not know it until last summer, the matter was kept entirely confidential at the time, for what reasons I do not know—the right hon. gentleman agreed to establish a defence committee in Canada in close co-relation with that Imperial Defence Committee. No announcement of that kind was made to Parliament by the right hon. gentleman at the time we might have expected the announcement to be made, and it remained for the Colonial Secretary a few weeks ago to make that belated announcement, as the right hon. gentleman had not seen fit to do so.

The despatch of the right hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies was laid on the table of the House on Friday, the 17th of January last; it is under date of the 11th of December 1912. When it first came it was confidential, but afterwards the governments of all the dominions sought permission to make it public. In that despatch, which is set forth in 'Hansard' on the date mentioned, the following passage occurred:

The unanimous view of all those present on May 30, 1911, was that the representations of the dominions should be not by the high commissioners, but by ministers who would be responsible to their own colleagues and Parliament, and, at the same time it was decided that a defence committee should be established in each dominion which would be kept in close touch with the Committee of Imperial Defence at home. The resolutions ultimately put forward by His Majesty's Government and accepted unanimously by the members of the Imperial conference at the Committee of Imperial Defence, were as follows:—

(1) That one or more representatives appointed by the respective governments of the dominions, should be invited to attend meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence when questions of naval and military defence affecting the overseas dominions are under consideration.

(2) The proposal that a defence committee should be established in each dominion is accepted in principle. The constitution of these defence committees is a matter for each dominion to decide.

Mr. BORDEN.

The right hon. gentleman did lay on the table of the House the report of the conference with respect to military affairs which was held on the fourteenth and seventeenth days of June, 1911, but so far as I am aware—I speak subject to correction—he has never laid upon the table of the House the proposals which I have just now referred to, and which were made, not at that conference, but at a meeting of the Imperial Defence Committee, and not on the fourteenth and seventeenth days of June, 1911, but on the 30th of May, 1911, an entirely different committee and an entirely different date.

I am supported in the view I take by what follows in the despatch of the right hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who, immediately following the quotation I have given, uses this language:

The Canadian Government having changed in the autumn of 1911, it was necessary, when Mr. Borden and his colleagues visited England this summer to put these proposals before them as they were of course unaware of the previous proceedings.

When I reached London I heard for the first time of the proceedings of this conference of the 30th of May, 1911, and, as I have already explained, I am not aware that up to the seventeenth day of January last they had ever been placed before Parliament. So that my right hon. friend is entirely correct when he says that the report of the work of the committee and the decision of the Committee of the Imperial Conference in respect to military defence held on the fourteenth and seventeenth days of June, 1911, was placed before this House on the date mentioned; but I was not alluding to that; I was alluding to the proposals which are set forth in the despatch of the Colonial Secretary. I was not referring to those dates, but to the thirtieth day of May. If I am in error in my statement with regard to that, of course I shall be very glad to be corrected, but up to the present I believe I am entirely correct in the statement I made on the 7th of April.

Right Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I have to observe, first of all, that I was not a member of the Imperial Defence Committee; my hon. friend the former Minister of Militia, Sir Frederick Borden, was a member of that. The proceedings of this committee are highly technical, and I understood they were confidential. Whatever was not confidential was published. I made application at the time to have published the resolutions of the Committee of the Imperial Conference, and they were published at my request and as soon as possible. I have not yet myself seen the report of the Imperial Defence Committee to which my right hon. friend has alluded, but so far as I can see it does not differ at all from the resolution adopted afterwards