

profession in Canada; his name carries weight wherever it is mentioned; he is known to be a man pre-eminent amongst the most eminent in surgery. In Toronto, moreover, he has the reputation of being a man of the highest character and integrity, and the very soul of honour. It is known that Dr. Bruce has made a report in which he has absolutely justified the charges made by the Minister of Militia; but it is known also that when the Minister of Militia ceased to be in office, a commission was appointed which controverted and denied everything that was affirmed in the report made by Dr. Bruce. Wherever Dr. Bruce had approved, the commission blamed, and wherever he had blamed the commission approved. We have not those reports; we should have them, and I hope we shall have them during the present session. In their absence it is not for me to pronounce either in favour of Dr. Bruce or in favour of the commission; but as far as my personal sentiment on the matter is concerned, I must say that, without further evidence, any information which is presented to me signed by Dr. Bruce will bear the character of truth, from the very fact that it bears the signature of Dr. Bruce.

After reviewing the evidence, not with any malice or passion, I am justified in concluding, as I stated at the beginning, that the Canadian Government have shown themselves throughout lax in the administration of affairs. They have allowed confusion to percolate all through the service, and it is obvious that without any cohesion and sound direction, and without unity of purpose and unity of action, it is impossible to expect anything like efficiency in the service.

The speech from the Throne refers to three things which I will briefly mention. First of all, it refers to the National Service. On this point I am disposed to take some issue with my hon. friend from Wentworth (Mr. Wilson), but I will not discuss the matter to-day. It would not be right, nor would it be doing justice, to undertake to discuss the National Service Commission until we have before us the Order in Council which has created it and the proceedings which have followed its creation. When these are brought down it will be useful to take up the subject.

The speech from the Throne mentions only two measures which are to be brought to our attention during the present session. One is the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation; the other is the extension of the term of this Parliament. I

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

will not say anything about these matters to-day. When matters of policy are mentioned in the speech from the Throne, it is always better to wait to discuss them when they are brought down. All I can say is that when they are brought down we shall discuss them, as we have done in the past, with absolute impartiality, looking only to the merits of the case.

The third subject which is mentioned is the Imperial Conference, to which the Prime Minister has been invited. At the opening of the House to-day my right hon. friend, the Prime Minister, stated that it was his intention to lay the papers on the table on Friday, but something intervened to prevent that being done. He also stated that he sent me the papers on Saturday, and I owe him the courtesy to say that I received them. There is nothing new in them except the answer made by the Government of Canada to the invitation. Although the invitation was published about a month ago, it may be well to recall it to the attention of the House. It is contained in the following despatch of the Colonial Secretary to His Excellency the Governor General:—

I wish to explain that what is contemplated by His Majesty's Government is not a session of the ordinary Imperial Conference, but a special War Conference of the Empire. His Majesty's Government therefore invite your Prime Minister to attend a series of special and continuous meetings of the War Cabinet in order to consider urgent questions affecting prosecution of the war, the possible conditions on which in agreement with our Allies we could assent to its termination, and the problems which will then immediately arise.

Your Prime Minister for the purpose of these meetings would be a member of the War Cabinet.

In view of the extreme urgency of the subjects of discussion, as well as of their supreme importance, it is hoped that your Prime Minister may find it possible, in spite of serious inconvenience involved, to attend at an early date—not later than the end of February. While the presence of your Prime Minister himself is earnestly desired by His Majesty's Government, they hope that if he sees insuperable difficulties, he will carefully consider the question of nominating a substitute, as they would regard it as a serious misfortune if any Dominions were left unrepresented.

As to the character of the conference, the outline seems to be rather hazy, but I offer no comment upon that. I may, however, in passing, offer an observation upon the statement here made:

Your Prime Minister would be a member of the War Cabinet.

There may be a constitutional question as to how the Prime Minister of Canada, who, though a member of the Privy Council, is