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NEUTRALITY  
(In Debate on Canada's Foreign Policy)

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MR. LAPOINTE:

I will ask my hon. friend further: Has he seriously considered what a declaration of absolute neutrality, as embodied in his resolution, would mean? Has he considered that, according to all constitutional writers, this would mean the secession of Canada from the commonwealth of nations? I do not think my hon. friend wants to go that far. There is all the difference in the world between neutrality, and participation or non-participation, which we shall be always free to declare, in the event of any war. The parliament of Canada will be always free to say whether or not we shall participate in any war. But neutrality is quite different. In the constitutional position of Canada to-day neutrality would mean that an enemy of our king could be a friend of Canada; that we could trade with him during a war in which the king might be engaged; that to nations with which the king might be at war we could send ordinary material anything that a neutral nation could sell to countries actively engaged in war.

This question as to the right of the dominions to be strictly neutral is one of the questions yet to be solved, and it will not be solved in the way suggested by my hon. friend.

MR. WOODSWORTH: (page 615)

The Minister of Justice had a good deal to say about neutrality. Let me point out that he differed very decidedly from the Prime Minister. The other day the Prime Minister made this statement, as reported at page 273 of unrevised Hansard:

Participation in war is the positive aspect, if I may put it in that way, and the question of neutrality is the negative aspect. Over and over again we have laid down the principle that so far as participation in war is concerned, it will be for the parliament of Canada to decide. Having taken that attitude with respect to participation, I think we might well take the same attitude with respect to neutrality.

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The Prime Minister was either leading the house to believe or labouring under the impression that we could decide in parliament whether or not we would be neutral. The Minister of Justice to-day took the other point of view, and I think the correct one. I should like to ask the Prime Minister some time—he is not in his seat—Is not Canada automatically at war when Great Britain is at war? It is all very well to say that it is for us to determine the extent to which we shall send reinforcements, if at all; but as the Minister of Finance\* explained to-day, if Great Britain is at war we are at war. But the Prime Minister says that parliament is going to decide as to neutrality. It is rather important to know that he thinks that way, but unfortunately that position is not sound.

*Justice.*