

devoted was to give them self-government—it was then that the principle was announced upon which the British empire is founded. My hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) the other day, in his speech on the first reading of this Bill, said that the British empire is of recent date. He is right, it is of recent date; the date was the day when the principle was adopted of self-government for the colonies. Consider, for a moment, what would be the position of Canada if we had continued to be governed, as we were in 1837, simply by irresponsible ministers in Downing street—irresponsible, I mean, to the people of this country? Should we have content, devotion, loyalty? No, we should have to-day what we had then—discontent, and dangerous dissatisfaction. Sir, the history of all countries which have had colonies is the same, with the exception of Britain in the nineteenth century. In every case there arose in the colonies a class of different interests from that of the mother country; the mother country would not yield; discontent crept in and led at last to estrangement. Lord Durham was the first statesman of all the ages to recognize this truth. And he proclaimed it boldly. And bolder yet was the remedy he suggested—give to the colonies the same rights and privileges and powers as are exercised by British men in their own islands, the power to govern themselves according to their own rules and notions. The conclusion of Lord Durham was so strong that there was nobody to combat it. But it was so much at variance with the practice of all the ages that there was no one to apply it. When the constitution of 1841 was ostensibly established upon the report of Lord Durham, there was no acknowledgment of the principle of self-government, and the instructions given by Lord John Russell to Mr. Poulett Thomson, the first governor under the new system, was to govern, not according to the views of ministers responsible to the people but in the manner directed by himself alone. And this is the manner in which Poulett Thomson carried out his instructions. In a letter to a friend he said:

I am not a bit afraid of the responsible government cry. I have already done much to put it down in its inadmissible sense; namely, the demand that the council shall be responsible to the assembly, and that the governor shall take their advice, and be bound by it. In fact, this demand has been made much more for the people than by them.

It was not until there was sent from England a man as broad in genius as Lord Durham himself—Lord Elgin—that, with the assistance of Baldwin and Lafontaine, we

had responsible government in this country. And it was from that date that the British empire started upon its triumphant march across the ages. I again pause to ask: When these great men, Durham, Elgin, Lafontaine and Baldwin, laid down the principle of responsible government in this country, did they set a limit upon its potentiality? No; they launched it out, untrammelled and unfettered, to inclose the earth in a bond of union and liberty. They did not tell the people that the principle could be trusted for a certain distance, but that it would have to be abandoned the moment they came to the ultimate result of its operation.

But now we are told that in matters of naval defence we are to abdicate the principle of responsible government; we are told that we can have responsible government in everything else, we can make our own laws, we can administer our own affairs, and even have control of our land forces, but that in matters of naval defence we should have no powers of our own. I need not say that this principle is one to which we on this side of the House cannot agree. We are told that the only way in which naval defence can be carried on is by contributions to the imperial navy. I have to submit that this idea of contribution seems to me repugnant to the genius of our British institutions; it smacks too much of tribute to be acceptable by British communities. The true conception of the British empire is the conception of new, growing, strong and wealthy nations, each one developing itself on the line of its own needs and conditions, but all joining in the case of common danger, and from all points of the earth, rushing upon the common enemy. But, Sir, the point is no longer arguable. The point has been settled at the last conference.

Many and many a time upon the floor of this House, in the press of this country, we have been assailed, and our action has been compared with the action of Australia, who, in 1902, agreed to give a contribution for the maintenance of the imperial navy. But, Sir, let us look and see what has recently taken place in Australia. Australia has abandoned the position it took in 1902, and it has come to the position taken by Canada. Australia to-day, like Canada, is building a fleet of her own. And, Sir, there is something still more significant; it is not Australia which is paying a contribution to Great Britain for the purposes of the Australian navy, it is Great Britain which is paying a contribution to Australia for that purpose. Need I say more? All the best men, even in the ranks of the Conservative party, who have given any attention to this question have come to the way of