

PAAP
JL
197.15
C4P8
no. 18

Speech of the Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

MARCH 10th, 1915

ON THE PRETENDED WAR BUDGET

"Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of summarizing the arguments which have been presented on this side of the House, on the subject now before us, and to present my views upon it in as concrete a form as possible. When at the opening of hostilities in the month of August last the Government announced that it had offered the services of Canada to the Government of Great Britain, if these services should be found useful, we on this side of the House, His Majesty's loyal Opposition, the Liberal party of Canada, declared at once that to this policy we would offer no objection, but on the contrary that we would give it loyal support. To that engagement, then announced, we have been absolutely faithful. We would have deemed it contrary to our dignity and to our duty if we had at that moment, by word or deed, in any way impeded the Government in the heavy responsibility it had assumed.

"But it would be equally contrary to our dignity and to our duty were we to fail to point out most seriously, the laches and deficiencies which mar the resolution introduced by the Government, as it asserts, in consequence of the War, but, as I believe, only under colour of the War. (Applause.)

Responsibility in War, as in Peace

"The attitude which we have assumed has in some quarters been animadverted upon in rather severe language. To the objections which have been urged against our course I for my part cannot pay any respect. The view represented by these objections, if it were to be adopted, would constitute a very serious stricture upon parliamentary institutions. It would mean that parliamentary institutions, while good enough in time of peace, would have to be discarded in time of war. It would mean that the Government, which in time of peace under our system, should be kept under rigorous observation, in time of war should be given an absolutely free hand. It would mean that the Opposition, which in time of peace has the right to approve or disapprove, to oppose or to consent, would in time of