

England, be it Liberal or be it Tory, which is the constituted authority to declare when the empire should engage in war. My belief is, it is only an opinion—and the opinion of every other member of the House is as good as mine—it is my opinion that whenever that time does come, I care not what government may be in power in Canada, when we shall have on the statute-book the right to determine whether or not we may send our ships to the help of the British navy, I have not the shadow of a doubt how the people of Canada will exercise that right. They will not stop to ask whether the war is just or unjust, for it will then be too late. It will be enough for them to know that the great empire of which we form a part is engaged in war, and then, in the words of the resolution of March last, every resource of the Canadian government and the Canadian people will be placed at the disposal of the empire.

Mr. J. A. CURRIE. I like to listen to the Minister of Finance because he can always sound the trumpet and beat the drum so loudly on questions of this kind. But let us get down to facts. The question put by the leader of the opposition to the right hon. gentleman is a question that should be answered. Let me assume that the British empire is at war with Liberia. Now, everybody knows that the republic of Liberia has no great fleet, or that it has no fleet of any consequence. Let us assume that the Canadian government has considered the question of whether we shall be at war with Liberia, and they shall decide that we are not at war with Liberia, according to the principle laid down to-day by the Prime Minister. Now, this is something that might easily happen, something like the warship 'Alabama,' the history of which we all remember. There is nothing to prevent a fast cruiser being sent by a foreign nation to Liberia and turned over to the Liberian government, commanded by Liberia to start out on a cruise of destruction against British commerce. Now, the case of the 'Alabama,' flying the Confederate flag, is analogous. Now, we will follow the reasoning of the hon. gentleman. Great Britain is at war with Liberia, but Canada is not at war with Liberia. That fast cruiser commissioned by the Liberian government, makes its way where it would naturally go, to the North Atlantic, possibly, probably, to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. When it reaches the Gulf of the St. Lawrence it comes under the observation of a Canadian warship. The captain of the Canadian warship sees this ship flying the flag of Liberia, and says: Well, we are not at war with Liberia, and I have no right to attack this ship until such time as the Can-

Mr. FIELDING.

adian parliament is summoned, or an order in council is passed to that effect. Whilst this warship of Liberia is under observation, it sights a British ship, say one of the Canadian Pacific railway steamers, which I understand are registered under British registry. The Liberian warship attacks this British merchant ship, fires at her, captures her, and the Canadian warship look on, and the captain says: I dare not fire a shot or interfere in any way, because Canada is not at war with Liberia. This Liberian cruiser—it is a possibility, bear in mind, a modern possibility—make a prize of this Canadian merchantman which is under British register. Well, it continues its career a little further on, still under the observation of the 'Niobes' and the 'Rainbows,' and it runs across a Canadian vessel that is registered under a Canadian register. It fires on the Canadian merchant ship, calls her to halt, the ship refuses to halt, the cruiser fires upon her, and kills a few men, and take the Canadian ship a prize. Then, of course, the Canadian warship would be justified, possibly, in taking action, under the old idea that there is a difference between hostilities and a declaration of war, in other words, that would be a case of hostilities, and the Canadian warship would proceed to fight the battle out with the Liberian warship, and would take the Liberian warship a prize and haul her into a Canadian port. Then again, under the laws of war, would the Canadian seamen be entitled to prize money? There are all kinds of conditions arising in that event, and these are all actual possibilities. The only clear cut way is to brush aside this argument that the Canadian fleet must be under the control continuously of the Canadian government, and that it could exist without being in the state of war when England is at war. The Liberian government, or the government of Hayti, might commission a vessel of this kind to make war on Great Britain. All these things have historical analogies, and I have instanced the case of the 'Alabama.' Would it be right for a Canadian war-vessel to refrain from firing on a Liberian war vessel if attacked? Everybody knows that a declaration of war and hostilities are altogether different things. The Chinese war was begun by a British warship boarding a Chinese junk. One or two of the greatest wars in history were commenced without any declaration of war, even by the British navy. In fact, the war between China and Japan was commenced by a Japanese war vessel firing on a Chinese troop ship without a declaration of war having been made. Would a Canadian warship be entitled to remain idle if a British merchant ship were attacked by a foreign cruiser when there was no declaration of war?