

In answer to an interrogation from my hon. friend from Pictou (Mr. Macdonald) regarding the position of Sir Charles Tupper with reference to Imperial federation, the hon. member for Calgary admitted that Sir Charles Tupper was against the idea of a contribution, but he endeavoured, as I understood him, to justify that on the ground, that Sir Charles Tupper took that position because he was looking to the ultimate federation of the Empire. My hon. friend from Calgary was singularly misinformed on that point. In the Kingdom Papers, No. 11, at page 40, it is pointed out:

In 1891, Lord Salisbury requested a deputation from the Imperial Federation League to prepare and submit some scheme. The league appointed a committee; the committee failed; and the league dissolved (1893.)

Sir Charles Tupper was a member of the committee. In its consultations, he had to fight those who proposed colonial contributions; and, afterwards, he wrote as follows:—

Knowing as I do that the most active members of the committee were mainly intent on levying a large contribution on the revenues of the colonies for the support of the army and navy of Great Britain, I am delighted to have been able, almost single-handed, to obtain such a report from such a committee.

In another publication, which I have under my hand, there is a communication from Sir Charles Tupper in which he points out that it was he who broke up this committee because of their taking that attitude. He was opposed to the action of the committee on the very ground upon which we, on this side of the House, oppose the present proposal before Parliament. May I point out also that upon this subject Sir Charles Tupper never changed his opinion. From the first he was opposed to a contribution not only in the days of the Imperial Federation Committee but he has been opposed to a contribution ever since. On November 20, 1909, after the scare of that year had passed away, he wrote a letter to the present right hon. Prime Minister from which I desire to read a few paragraphs. The letter is as follows:

The Mount, Bexley Heath,
November 20, 1909.

My Dear Mr. Borden:

I have read with much interest the communication of the Canadian correspondent of the Times on naval defence in to-day's issue of that paper. I regard that question as more important than any mere party issue, and am glad to learn that you are resolved to maintain the patriotic attitude of the Conservative party assumed last session. A few years ago, when Canada was struggling to open up for British settlement the great granary of the world, a few gentlemen here raised the question of a Canadian contribution to the Imperial navy. I joined issue with them and was sustained by the press and public opinion. It was admitted that Canada was not only no burden to the Mother Country,

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but without her harbours and coal mines on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, Britain would require a larger navy. Contrast the progress of Canada, Australia and New Zealand under Imperial management, and since it was relinquished, and it will be seen to whom their present importance is due.

The letter proceeds:

Regarding as I do British institutions as giving greater security to life, property and liberty than any other form of government, I have devoted more than half a century to increasing efforts to preserve the connection of Canada and the Crown. When Great Britain was involved in the struggle in the Transvaal, I led the van in forcing the Canadian Government to send aid. But I did not believe then, and I do not believe now, in taxation without representation. The demand which will soon be made by some that Canada should contribute to the Imperial navy in proportion to population, I regard as preposterous and dangerous.

I read with pleasure the resolution passed unanimously by the House of Commons which pledged Parliament to proceed vigorously with the construction of the Canadian navy and to support Britain in every emergency, and all that in my opinion is required is to hold the Government of the day bound to carry that out honestly. Navies are maintained largely to promote the security of the mercantile shipping of the country to which they belong.

The letter concludes with these paragraphs:

I cannot understand the demand for dreadnoughts in the face of the fact that the Admiralty and British Government have determined that it was not the best mode of maintaining the security of the Empire, and arranged with Canada and Australia (the latter of whom had offered one or two dreadnoughts) for the construction of the local navies to keep open the trade routes in case of war.

All difficulty as to the question of autonomy is now removed as it is fully recognized that the great outlying portions of the Empire are sister nations, and that means are adopted to secure uniformity in the naval forces of the Empire in the design and construction of the ships, and in the training of the officers and men. They are also to be interchangeable and thus secure uniformity in every respect so as to act as effective units of the British navy.

Of course the Government of the day will be held accountable for carrying out the policy thus agreed upon in a thoroughly effective manner, but I cannot avoid thinking that a fearful responsibility will rest upon those who disturb or destroy the compact entered into on this vitally important question.

(Sgd.) Charles Tupper.

My hon. friend from Calgary seemed to be singularly misinformed as to the attitude taken by Sir Charles Tupper in reference to the Imperial Federation League and the naval question. That hon. gentleman, in the course of his further remarks, made an attack upon my hon. friend the junior member of Halifax (Mr. Maclean) for the criticism