

pire would require to be exerted to the full, wars in which disaster might occur unless the naval forces of all the great dominions of the empire should take their due and proper part. Now, the Prime Minister, as I understand it, says that the Canadian naval force shall take no part in any such wars until after the government of Canada shall have taken the matter into consideration and determined whether or not it be a war in which it is proper that the Canadian naval force should take part. Until that declaration is made, under section 18, the Canadian naval force shall take no part. That is apparently the fair meaning and that is the interpretation placed upon it by the Prime Minister. I pointed out before six o'clock some curious results of that. One curious result is that the Canadian naval force will be, so to speak, neutral until that order in council has been made. The Prime Minister has distinctly stated that it will not attack a ship of the enemy, even if war shall have been declared unless and until an order in council has been passed. Therefore, it will not co-operate with the other naval forces of the empire. That is his direct and unequivocal declaration. He said if a Canadian ship were attacked it would resist, it would fight, but unless a Canadian ship were attacked it would take no part. I inquired whether that neutrality, because it is nothing less than neutrality in a war in which the empire is engaged, would extend to the ports and harbours of Canada, so that, pending the period during which no order in council was made, ships of the enemy could come for the purpose of obtaining supplies, and, if necessary, refitting, to the ports of Canada exactly as if Canada were not part of the empire at all. My right hon. friend did not give me any answer to that, and I do not see, why, if our ships are to be neutral, our ports and harbours should not be neutral too. If we are to assume the status of a neutral power in such a case in one respect I do not know any reason why it should not be legitimately followed by assuming the status of a neutral power in every other respect. Well, let us look at the conditions to which the declaration of the Prime Minister will bring us. He says that our ships will defend themselves if attacked, but if not, they will not attack a ship of the enemy. Every one who has studied modern conditions knows that nearly every great nation of the world, at all events, certain great naval powers, have merchant ships with guns in their holds. These ships, upon a declaration of war, and such declarations come very suddenly under modern conditions, mount the guns they have in their holds, hoist the naval flag of their country and prey upon the commerce of any other nation against which war may have been declared. Suppose that one of these ships

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mounts her guns, flies the flag and proceeds to prey upon British commerce under the very guns of a Canadian cruiser; according to the declaration of the Prime Minister that Canadian cruiser would not interfere until an order in council has been passed. Suppose that a Canadian cruiser upon the high seas in sight of British ships should observe those British ships to be attacked by the cruiser of a nation which had suddenly declared war against Great Britain, a Canadian ship is not to attack unless she is attacked herself. Then, I presume, she is to remain idly by while British ships are captured by the cruiser of the hostile power, and all this for the reason that no order in council has been passed at Ottawa. A British merchant man might very well appeal, one would think, to a ship of war flying the British flag for protection, but, under circumstances such as those the only answer that the Canadian ship could give would be that she could take no part whatever until an order in council had been passed at Ottawa, and pending that she must assume the status of a neutral vessel. All this seems to be very unworkable; it seems very absurd. But, further and more important than all that; it would simply have the result I have indicated; it would simply mean a declaration of complete independence from the rest of the empire. That is all it could possibly mean. Therefore, it seems to me, for these reasons, which I have very hastily and cursorily alluded to that section 18 as interpreted by the Prime Minister is, in the first place, unworkable if we are to remain in the empire, and, in the second place, if it is worked out on the lines indicated by the Prime Minister, then it means that Canada on the day and on the occasion when that section is worked out in that way ceases to be a part of the British empire and becomes an independent nation.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. All the hypotheses to which my hon. friend has just given expression would apply in the same way to the royal navy as to the Canadian navy. What has the royal navy to do before a declaration of war has taken place in Great Britain? It may be attacked by the enemy, and it would repel an attack, but for all that I do not think it would precipitate an attack. Take the case of the war between Russia and Japan. It is, I believe, an historical fact now that the Japanese fleet at Port Arthur, before there had been a declaration of war, at all events before the declaration of war was known, attacked the Russian fleet and the Russian fleet had nothing to do under such circumstances, but to meet the attack and repel it. And so it is with regard to the Canadian navy. The Canadian navy will repel an attack, but will not attack until there is authority to do so. My hon. friend knows