

face the British government in Africa, that the only solution of those problems is a confederation of the Dutch States and the English States, after the pattern of our Canadian confederation. I was of the opinion that if, unfortunately, war were to break out, as it has broken out, that grand scheme would inevitably be postponed, and, perhaps, it might be for ever killed. That was the reason why I was not enthusiastic for the war; that was the reason I did not move as hastily as my hon. friend would have me do. But the moment it appeared to me that the people of the Transvaal would not grant the equal rights which British people in that country had a right to expect, then, Sir, I felt no longer any hesitation, my mind was made up, because I saw there was nothing else to do but to prosecute the war to the bitter end.

Sir, the hon. gentleman has attempted to be very severe upon us to-day, but, he has forgotten, or passed over lightly, the only weak point as to which our position is weak. From the constitutional point of view our position is weak, from the constitutional point of view our position might be absolutely indefensible. In fact, there is no defence for it. We are without the law; our only justification is what I said a moment ago that we knew, that, in acting as we did against the provision of constitutional government, we were simply carrying out what was the desire and the will of the Canadian people. Had it not been for that, had it not been that we had with us the whole of the Canadian people, without the distinction of race or creed, had it not been that we had with us the great majority of our fellow-countrymen, our action would have been simply indefensible, but we relied on the fact that we well knew, from all the evidence we had, from the evidence of the action of my hon. friend himself, from the evidence of the press, of public meetings, from all the modes by which public opinion can express itself, we well knew that in acting as we did we were simply carrying out the will of the Canadian people. In passing the Order in Council which we did we put a restriction upon it. The hon. gentleman has found fault with it, and it is just as well that the matter should be threshed out here and now. When we decided to send the first contingent to South Africa we passed the following Order in Council:—

The Committee of the Privy Council have had under consideration a despatch, dated October 3, 1899, from the Right Hon. Mr. Chamberlain.

The Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to whom the said despatch was referred, observes that the Colonial Secretary, in answer to the offers which have been sent to him from different parts of Canada expressing the willingness and anxiety of Canadians to serve Her Majesty's government in the war which for a long time has been threatening with the Transvaal Republic, and which, unfortunately, has actually commenced, enunciates the conditions under

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which such offers may be accepted by the Imperial authorities. Those conditions may be practically summed up in the statement that a certain number of volunteers, by units of 125 men, with a few officers, will be accepted to serve in the British army now operating in South Africa, the moment they reach the coast, provided the expenses of their equipment and transportation to South Africa are defrayed, either by themselves or by the colonial government.

The Prime Minister, in view of the well known desire of a great many Canadians who are ready to take service under such conditions, is of opinion that the moderate expenditure which would thus be involved for the equipment and transportation of such volunteers may readily be undertaken by the government of Canada without summoning parliament, especially as such an expenditure, under such circumstances, cannot be regarded as a departure from the well-known principles of constitutional government and colonial practice, nor construed as a precedent for future action.

I believe that these were wise words and saving words, to say that this action should not be a precedent for future action. It could not be a precedent for future action, certainly from the colonial point of view.

Mr. FOSTER. What is the number of that?

The PRIME MINISTER. No. 93. But, I will go further, and I will say that not only from the British constitutional point of view it is not to be construed as a precedent, but that even from the colonial point of view it is not to be construed as a precedent. If the result of our action were to be, that in any war of Great Britain, we were to be constrained to take a part, as upon this precedent, I would strongly object. What we have done we have done, as I said at Sherbrooke, in the plenitude, in the majesty of our colonial, legislative independence. I claim for Canada this, that, in future, Canada shall be at liberty to act or not act, to interfere or not interfere, to do just as she pleases, and that she shall reserve to herself the right to judge whether or not there is cause for her to act. In the words of Rudyard Kipling I repeat:—

Daughter am I in my mother's house,
But mistress in my own;
The gates are mine to open,
The gates are mine to close.

That is the position we have taken upon this question. We are independent, as I said in London, absolutely independent, and though we are ready, and though we hope that condition shall never rise, if that condition shall arise we shall act in regard to it just as we have done upon this occasion, consider, reflect, think, weigh, and if we think that there is cause for interference we shall interfere. Now, Sir, the hon. gentleman found fault with the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bonrassa), because the hon. member for Labelle did not see eye to eye with us upon this question, and the hon. gentleman found great fault with me be-