

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes, that is correct, and we would have had our ships afloat when the war began had it not been for the attitude of those who opposed Sir Wilfrid Laurier's policy at the general election of 1911. That is the point to which I wish to draw attention. That is the one point in what my right hon. friend has said to-night to which I take exception. He said that the reason for the change in policy was because of an emergency.

Mr. BENNETT: That is so.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: That was not the reason. The reason was that after the Conservative party came into power because of the attack on the Laurier naval policy, it found it could not unite on any naval policy. There was a wide division in the party which made it necessary to find some other means of dealing with and at the same time shelving the question of naval defence. Unfortunately there are not many in the house to-night who were here at that time, but there will be some who will recall that when Sir Robert Borden formed his cabinet he took in the Hon. Mr. Monk, who was one of the leaders of the Nationalist party. Mr. Monk was a leading Conservative, but he left the party assumedly to lead the Nationalist party in the province of Quebec. There was Mr. LaVergne and others who claimed they were entitled to seats in the cabinet for the part they had played as Nationalists. For a year nothing was done with respect to defence but Sir Robert Borden was ultimately obliged to take some action with regard to naval defence. The minute that he took any action, that minute Mr. Monk resigned from the government and a serious situation was created for the administration.

In order to do something, Sir Robert Borden determined upon the policy of making a contribution in the form of three of the largest dreadnoughts in the world, to cost \$35,000,000. How was that action construed? Was it construed as being a policy of Canadian defence or was it construed as being a policy of imperial defence? The answer given to that question depended upon the part of Canada in which the question was asked. When it was asked in the province of Quebec the answer would be: We are making a contribution to get rid of this business of defence once and for all; that is what Sir Robert Borden has in mind; he does not want to start a naval service in Canada and have a navy on our Atlantic and Pacific coasts as a result of which Canada will certainly be drawn into European and Asiatic conflicts that may take place; he wants to get rid of what has been

[Mr. Bennett.]

begun, so he makes this contribution. On the other hand, if the question was asked in Ontario, the reply would be that this was to meet an emergent condition; that the situation of the empire was so serious that we could not wait to construct a Canadian naval service; we had to make an immediate contribution.

Mr. STIRLING: Surely reference should be made to the great difficulty connected with the manning of the two cruisers which had been provided under the 1910 act; they were undermanned.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I must say that I regret having to bring this matter into the discussion because it relates to something that is not creditable and that fortunately belongs to the past. I am crediting my right hon. friend with having given a true outline of the policy of Sir Wilfrid Laurier with regard to Canadian defence and imperial defence. He has stated it very clearly and fairly, but it must not be forgotten that Sir Wilfrid Laurier suffered political defeat at the instance of the Conservative party for taking the stand he took at that time. He suffered defeat in his own province and lost the confidence of men who were dearer to his heart than those in any other part of the dominion. He suffered defeat and his policies alike of trade and defence suffered defeat—because he was so completely misrepresented. I feel it due to his memory to recall the circumstances. It is now said that it was simply a question of emergency; but that is not so. The political warfare of that time created a chapter in our political history which I am sure many of those who figured in it have often wished had never taken place.

However, let the past be past. May I say again that nothing could have vindicated Sir Wilfrid Laurier's memory and his position with respect to the defence of Canada, and the relations of Canada to the British Empire, more splendidly or eloquently than the words uttered this evening by my right hon. friend. I join with him in his view that so far as the future of the naval defence of Canada is concerned, the policy cannot be better expressed than it is in the Naval Service Act. That act was passed during the administration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and as my right hon. friend has said, it has remained upon the statute books up to the present time with very little, if any, material change.

The act contemplates the gradual development of fleet units on the Atlantic and the Pacific. It looks to Canada taking an increasing share in the protection of her own coasts. This is why, in bringing forward the

defence measures which the government brought forward this year, we stressed as strongly as we did the fact that these measures were for the defence of Canada. At the close of the debate I was very careful to say that one of the reasons why it had been necessary to stress so strongly that these measures were for the defence of Canada was because it had been represented in many quarters that they were not for the defence of Canada, that the government was taking the action it was in order to be prepared to send another expeditionary force overseas. That was a ground of opposition to our defence policy.

I may be entirely wrong, but I doubt very much if the British government itself will ever send another expeditionary force to Europe. I think it is extremely doubtful if any of the British dominions will ever send another expeditionary force to Europe. Were war to come on suddenly, I think we would find that the conditions of a world conflict would be so different to what they were in the last war, that anything in the nature of expeditionary forces to be sent from one continent to another would occasion a good deal more than second thought.

However, that is apart from the question. What I have risen also to say is that the minister in asking for this appropriation to purchase the two destroyers is doing so to enable us to increase the Canadian naval service under the Canadian Naval Service Act. The Canadian Naval Service Act has since the time it was passed until to-day stood consistently as the expression of Liberal policy, now Canada's policy on naval defence. It will continue so to stand.

Mr. BENNETT: I may suggest to the right hon. leader of the government that section 20 of the Naval Service Act provides:

In case of an emergency the governor in council may place at the disposal of His Majesty, for general service in the Royal Navy, the naval service or any part thereof, any ships or vessels of the naval service, and the officers and seamen serving in such ships or vessels, or any officers or seamen belonging to the naval service.

That action by order in council would indicate an emergency. However, that is a matter of unimportance in one sense as parliament would be called in any event within fifteen days. I think it is highly undesirable to discuss that disputatious matter in connection with this question. There should be some effort at coordination and cooperation between the government of Canada and the government of Great Britain at the approaching conference. We are replacing two worn

out destroyers which were loaned to us with two which we are buying at a cost of one million dollars each. Four destroyers and four mine sweepers are insignificant compared with what was contemplated by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In that regard it might be well to point out that the initial action was taken by Sir George Foster. It is a little difficult to understand how the replacement of a couple of worn out destroyers by the purchase of four-year old destroyers can be regarded as in any sense coordination or cooperation in the sense in which Sir Wilfrid Laurier intended.

My purpose in speaking, however, was rather to invite the government to avail itself of the opportunity than to engage in contentious discussion with respect to these matters. It is a sharply contentious question whether or not there was an emergency. I thought in 1912 that there never was a greater emergency—with the completion of the Kiel canal, the beginning of the construction of dreadnoughts, and the passing of the naval act in Germany. That was my view then; it is my view still, and we could not have had a fleet unit ready had we let the tenders in September, 1911, for that purpose. But there are matters which have to do with what you might call the narrow and contentious side of what is after all an issue far larger than individuals or parties, affecting as it does so supremely the preservation of civilization and the peace and happiness of the world. My object was to avoid as far as possible any contentious element and keep within the language used by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to which I have given adherence on so many occasions, and to which I still adhere, because it met with the approval of the Conservative party in 1909 and 1910; in 1909, when the resolution was brought forward and accepted unanimously by the House of Commons; and in 1910, when the Naval Act was passed in furtherance of the resolution passed in 1909. That is why, instead of using my own words, although it is painful to the house to listen to so much reading, I have quoted from the speeches of Sir Wilfrid in 1912 to indicate the history that brought about the passing of the Naval Act.

I do not desire to get into any discussion of nationalist issues or the difficulties that were experienced, but I again urge upon the Prime Minister and his ministers the great necessity at this time, in view of the similarity of the conditions now existing with those to which Sir Wilfrid referred, of coordinating if possible our effort with the larger effort, and of cooperating by every means within our