

My argument is leading up to the next point, and a most important one in my judgment. Seeing that we have these responsibilities as a people, and what our responsibilities are, just as in Australia, New Zealand and United South African States, what was the action of the imperial government? They recognized exactly what I am endeavouring to enforce, what Sir John Macdonald endeavoured to enforce in 1886, twenty-three years ago. The action of the imperial government was to call a conference of the colonies for the question of defence. We had repeated conferences in England, but never before one called for the special purpose of considering how the empire could best be defended. No doubt England was alarmed and feared that Germany had sinister intentions against the empire, and in her arrogance, because of her increased prosperity, her vast military forces and with a population of 63,000,000 people, she might undertake an attack upon England which might prove fatal to the security of the British empire. There was alarm. I think it was unfounded. However, I can only speak as an outsider, and I must respect, as I do, the opinion that to a great extent prevailed in England, although that opinion might have been exaggerated in reaching us here. What was done? They called a conference of the Dominions over seas, for the purpose of military and naval defence. Now I want that circumstance to be regarded as a recognition of the solidarity of the British empire. It is the first time in the history of the empire that such a recognition has been so distinctly given. Great Britain had never before consulted the colonies in matters of defence. In 1867 she withdrew her troops from the colonies in the hope that they would provide means to defend themselves. She surrendered Esquimalt and Halifax to us, believing we were able to take care of them. But latterly the opinion has grown with British statesmen that the empire is one, and that only by a union of the colonies or of the Dominions over seas, which is now the proper term, could England be adequately defended. That conference was called. I have here the speech of Mr. As-

Hon. Mr. ROSS (Middlesex).

quith dealing with the subject. The conference was called for the purpose of discussing the general question of the naval and military defence of the empire. It is somewhat remarkable, the attitude of Downing Street—that was a term of offence at one time—and of the imperial government towards the colonies. When we were held in a leash, with a tight rein, and driven in ways we did not want to go, there were complaints, and well founded complaints. Latterly Britain seems to have better understood how to manage her colonies, and she has given them such political liberty as they have desired. We have had it in confederation. We have had it by the union of 1841, and notably under the late Governor General, Lord Elgin, who established the government of Canada upon a firm basis. Certainly we have had it since confederation. But autonomy or self government is one thing, and a union of the autonomous colonies of the empire for defence is another thing. It is a pleasing feature. There is a good deal of romance about it. If I chose to be sentimental over the matter, I should find a good deal of sentiment in the idea of the old mother calling together her children from beyond the seas, to consult how the integrity of the empire could be best preserved; how the old flag could be most secure, not a matter of how England or Great Britain herself, could be saved, but how the colonies as part of the empire should be saved with her. It was not a question of defending England or Great Britain. It was a question for the general naval and military defence of the empire. That was the question to consider and it was very gratifying to us, very flattering indeed, to know that at the council board at which was discussed the defence of the greatest empire of ancient and modern times, there sat two Canadians to consult with the Premier of Great Britain the head of the Admiralty Department and the other great officers of State, and be received by the government afterwards in consultation as to how that great empire could be made secure and how the tide of war could be beaten back, should war be threatened in any quarter. Well they consulted and what does Mr. Asquith say?