

between the Prime Minister and the ex-Minister of Militia and his colleagues was the question of the control of the Canadian forces in Great Britain. It is due to the ex-Minister of Militia to say that he stated forcibly his views and his complaints upon this matter. On the 18th October last the Prime Minister sent to the ex-Minister of Militia a letter enclosing a draft order in council for the reorganization of the Department of Militia and Defence and the control of the forces in Great Britain. The draft order in council is not included in the correspondence but it is manifest from the context that it was an order which was passed at a subsequent period to create a second portfolio of militia in Great Britain and to have two Ministers of Militia, one residing in Canada and one residing in Great Britain. The ex-minister went at length into the whole subject and took occasion to put his case quite fully before the Prime Minister. I call the special attention of the House to the reasons which he gave for claiming the control of the forces in Great Britain. This is what he says:

From the outset I strongly objected to the fact that practically the entire management of our force, our supplies, our equipment, our transport, etc., had been taken completely out of our hands, and was controlled by the British authorities, we, notwithstanding, paying the bill.

In October, 1914, in conversation on the subject with the late Earl Kitchener, he pointed out that the Canadian High Commissioner had intimated to him that it was the desire of the Canadian Government that these troops should be regarded as purely British, and that Canada should have nothing to say in their management while in England or at the front. I drew his attention to Section 177 of the Army Act, and to the spirit and principles of the Constitution, but he again intimated that he understood it was the desire of the Canadian Government that the troops were to be handed over to them absolutely as "British Regulars." To this I objected, and pointed out that I fully believed that our force, under officers of our own selection should, at the front, be under the command of the British Commander-in-Chief, yet the appointment of officers at the front, and the control of everything in connection with the force while in Britain, should be entirely with Canada; but I further stated that I felt in such a great struggle where each was actuated by proper motives, there should be no need of friction.

He goes on;

I do not know whether the Canadian High Commissioner had the authority of the Canadian Government or not; but a day or two later that gentleman, of his own initiative, strongly spoke to me and briefly said: "You do not pretend surely to have anything to do with the Canadian soldiers in Britain." I suggested that he might be well advised to study not alone the Canadian Military Law,

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

but the British Army Act, as well as comprehend the spirit of the Constitution. I felt then, as I feel today, and as I am pleased to say the entire British Government and War Office officers also realize to-day that our officers and men being in the pay of Canada, Canada should absolutely control them in Canada and in Britain, excepting in so far as securing camping grounds is concerned; and at the front for everything excepting the command and general administration under the command.

He goes on to say:

I had to accept, under protest, for the first year, this management of the Force in Britain. The anomaly of such a state of things is apparent. The Canadian soldier in the trenches must voice his complaint, if any, through the Parliament of Canada and the Minister of Militia and Defence must accept responsibility. How could the Canadian soldier obtain redress through the British House of Commons? Kipling's lines hold good:

'Daughter in her Mother's house,
Mistress in her own.'

As well as another standard maxim, 'Taxation implies representation and brings responsibility.'

Sir, let me call the attention of the House to this very remarkable letter. The ex-Minister of Militia says to the Prime Minister that when he went to England for the purpose of looking after the Canadian soldiers, he was told by Lord Kitchener that it was understood that he was not to look after the troops but that they should be handed over and treated like British regulars. He was told also by the High Commissioner that he could not presume to have any control over Canadian troops while they were in England. Is that parliamentary government? Is that constitutional administration? Here is a minister of the Crown told by one of his colleagues in England that he has no authority when he wants to exercise such authority. What does it mean? It means, as I said a moment ago, that there was no unity of purpose, no unity of thought, no unity of action and, when there is no unity, is it possible to expect efficiency? That is the complaint which I have to make. My right hon. friend, in one of his letters to the Minister of Militia, states that at a time when all the energies of the Prime Minister should have been absorbed in the war, they were employed in smoothing out these petty quarrels. Here are his words:

My time and energies, although urgently needed for much more important duties, have been very frequently employed in removing difficulties thus unnecessarily created.

Sir, I can believe that. The Prime Minister had an enormous load upon his shoulders; immense responsibilities to tax his time and energies to the utmost. And