

by this Naval Bill. May I be pardoned if I tell my hon. friend that, in my simplicity and without the responsibility of office, if there be an emergency I know a better way of meeting it than by the Naval Bill. It is now on the statute book of this country. It is known as the Naval Service Act of 1910. It is an Act for which hon. gentlemen opposite are much responsible as we are. So long as it remains on the statute book unreppealed, it is the Act of the party clothed with the responsibility of government, just as much as it was originally the obligation of the party that initiated it. May I be pardoned if I refer to a conversation I had in 1902, with Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain. I had the honour of being a guest of Sir Gilbert Parker. Many distinguished noblemen, and statesmen were also guests at his hospitable table. After dinner we retired to the drawing room and it occurred that Mr. Chamberlain sought me out. I suppose he knew I was Premier of the province of Ontario, and entitled to a little attention. One of the questions he asked me was, 'I understand the Liberal party has been a long while in power in your province. How long?' I said, 'Not very long, we are just in our thirty-first year, that is all.' He said, 'That is too long, you should have been in and out two or three times in that period.' I said, 'That may be, Mr. Chamberlain, but if you happened to be the Premier you would not like your reign cut short just when, for some constitutional reasons, it might be desirable.' He said, 'That is not the point. The point is this; unless there is a change of party, every Act passed in your term of office will be charged against you as the policy of the government in legislation on party grounds. If you retire, the succeeding government will either repeal your legislation or adopt it. If they adopt it, then it is as much theirs as yours. They are responsible for it as you were when you were in power, and instead of being political legislation it becomes national legislation.' A very important constitutional point, and, disclosed to me for the first time. The Act of 1910 is now national legislation. It does not belong to the Liberal party now because we handed it over to the hon. gentlemen when we handed over the seals of office. They have assumed its responsibility because they have not repealed or amended it.

Objections Considered.

1. Now that leads me to consider my first objection to this Bill, namely that it is unnecessary as under the Laurier Act of 1910, all that is proposed to be done under the Bill before us and much more can be done for the defence of the empire. In the first place the Naval Bill provides for a contribution of only thirty-five millions (\$35,000,000), a very generous contribution which we would cheerfully vote if no other consideration were involved. Under the Laurier Act of 1910, now in force, any number of millions could be contributed by parliament if so disposed. Why then harass parliament with a Bill which is not required for emergency purposes and which is not as effective as the Act of 1910. If the hon. gentlemen are sincere in their efforts to meet an emergency, let them withdraw the Bill now before us, and submit to the House a supplementary estimate for ten or fifteen millions for the speedy construction of battleships, wherever they can be built and then, from year to year, ask parliament for such additional sums as may be necessary for their com-