

I think I am correct in stating that my hon. friend brought this matter before the House a year ago in the form of a question. And my hon. colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, said that it concerned only the Imperial Government, inasmuch as it did not affect the public moneys of Canada in any way, therefore he was unable to supply the information asked for. I think that we ought to take the same position to-day. For all expenditure of the public money of Canada, the ministers are accountable to this House and the House is entitled to every information, but this is an expenditure of Imperial money for which this Government is not accountable to this House.

I took part in the debate on that occasion, a fact of which the Solicitor General, speaking the other day, reminded the House. I then took the position that the motion presented was not within the purview of Parliament, but that if charges of wrong-doing were made against the Government in connection with the purchase of hay and oats for the Imperial authorities, and if a committee of investigation were asked, that investigation would be granted. I take that attitude to-day. Let me quote from the Solicitor General to show how he represented my attitude in that debate:

The motion, however, was pressed, and the late Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) himself took a part in the discussion. Here I shall quote the words of the late Prime Minister:

"I believe that everything in this matter was done fairly and well. We have no complaint from the British Government, and I therefore see no reason why the House should inquire into the expenditure of money which does not concern it.

Mr. Borden: I would like to know whether the right hon. gentleman is willing or not to have these purchases ventilated in the Committee of Public Accounts, as they might be if they were the expenditure of this country.

The Prime Minister: Certainly not.

In the language which I am reported to have made use of on that occasion, certainly there is no justification for the statement which I made a moment ago, that on that occasion I stated that if charges were made and an investigation asked it would be our duty to grant the investigation. But I have not quoted from the Hansard of 1903, I have quoted from the report of my observations in 1903 as given by the Solicitor General in Hansard this year; and there is quite a difference between what I said on that occasion and what I am represented by the Solicitor General as having said on that occasion, because my hon. friend the Solicitor General curtailed my remarks, I should say garbled my remarks, both at the beginning and at the end. My hon. friend shakes his head. Let us go to the authority. Here is Hansard of 1903. After the answer of the Government to the motion of Mr.

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

Monk had been given by Mr. Fielding, the Finance Minister of that day, I intervened in the debate, upon my hon. friend the then member for Victoria and Haliburton, the present Minister of Militia, jumping into the debate with characteristic impetuosity. This is what he said:

Mr. Hughes: The fair name of Canada is at stake. There are very serious scandals in connection with not only these oats and hay purchases but also with purchases of horses. I would like the hon. gentleman to understand that when our Government gives instructions to its officers, who are paid by the Canadian people, the Canadian people are going to inquire into the actions of these men. I hope that the right hon. the Prime Minister will come off his high horse—not one of those horses which were bought for \$40 and sold for \$150—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Sir SAM HUGHES: Might I suggest to the gentlemen who are laughing that this was part of my remarks at that time?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Oh, yes, in 1903. It was not one of those horses which were rejected as too old in 1899 and bought in 1914. I continue the quotation:

—and give us the information asked for.

The Prime Minister (Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier): My hon. friend from Victoria (Mr. Hughes) ought to be more careful than to use such language.

Mr. Hughes: I take the responsibility of my language, and I am prepared, if the Government will give me a committee, to prove what I have said.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. gentleman has charges to make, he knows that there are ways and means of making them. This is not the way to make a charge.

Mr. Hughes: Would the hon. gentleman give a committee of the House or a commission?

The Prime Minister: The hon. gentleman knows how to proceed if he has any charges to make, and if he has it is his duty to make them. Although the money expended was not that of Canada but of the Imperial Government, still, if he has charges to make, if he thinks he can prove any scandal, it is his duty to make these charges, and he should not have delayed so long; but he cannot expect the Government to take notice of vain words thrown on the floor of Parliament. There has been no charges so far as I know, made, and the hon. gentleman has no warrant to speak as he does.

All this I said in 1903; but all this was not quoted by my hon. friend the Solicitor General. I did say this, which was cited by the Solicitor General:

I believe that everything in this matter was done fairly and well. We have had no complaint from the British Government, and I therefore see no reason why the House should inquire into the expenditure of money which does not concern it.

Mr. Borden (Halifax): I would like to know whether the right hon. gentleman is willing or not to have these purchases ventilated in the