

the previous government asked that they might have opportunity to give consideration to the matter before replying with respect to the request to make public any part of the correspondence. I have since received from the present government in Great Britain a communication with respect to publicity, and it is along the line which I have indicated to my right hon. friend.

In this connection, I might as well give to hon. gentlemen the substance of a part of a despatch which was sent on October 17. It was to the effect that as the need for the immediate summoning of Parliament was apparently passed, it was our purpose to adhere to the original intention of having parliament meet in January. That we should like to be free at that time to bring down all the correspondence that has passed between our respective governments on the Near East situation; that parliament would expect this, and that any refusal on our part to comply with the wish of parliament might create misunderstanding or misapprehension.

In reply to that request, expressing anew our desire to make public all of the correspondence, the present government in Great Britain has sent a further communication as recently as the 27th of January, stating in so many words, that they realize it may be necessary and essential for me to make a statement to parliament setting out the purport of the correspondence between the two governments, and explaining in particular the attitude of Canada, but that at the present juncture the British government would deprecate the publication of the actual text of the telegrams. Part of the correspondence it was stated was necessarily confidential. The request was repeated that a general statement only should be made and that I should refrain from laying any of the telegrams before parliament.

I have thought it only fair to the present administration in this country and to both administrations in the Old Country, to make perfectly clear the circumstances as respects the correspondence not being brought down. It is solely because most of it is of that confidential character that, with the situation what it is in Europe at the present time, it would probably not be in the interest of any of the parties there that the correspondence should be made public.

I shall conclude, Mr. Speaker, by making mention anew of the words of the reply which was sent by our government on the 18th of September in reply to the despatch which came two days previously. After mentioning that the Cabinet had had under consideration

the representations of the despatch received, it was stated that it was the view of the government that public opinion in Canada would demand authorization on the part of parliament as a necessary preliminary to the despatch of a contingent to participate in the conflict in the Near East; that we would welcome the fullest possible information in order to decide upon the summoning of parliament.

In this somewhat hurried manner, I have not, I regret, been able to give the House as much in the way of information as I should like to have been privileged to give; if there has been any reserve or reticence, it has been due solely to the endeavour to maintain the obligation of secrecy which has been imposed upon us in virtue of the character of the communications that have been received. As regards the part which our government has taken in this matter, I would say to my right hon. friend (Mr. Meighen) that we have felt and feel very strongly that, if the relations between the different parts of the British Empire are to be made of an enduring character, this will only be through a full recognition of the supremacy of parliament, and this particularly with regard to matters which may involve participation in war. It is for parliament to decide whether or not we should participate in wars in different parts of the world, and it is neither right nor proper for any individual or for any group of individuals to take any step which in any way might limit the rights of parliament in a matter which is of such great concern to all the people of our country.

On motion of Mr. Forke the debate was adjourned.

On motion of Mr. Mackenzie King the House adjourned at 6.20 p.m.

Friday, February 2, 1923

The House met at three o'clock.

REPORTS AND PAPERS

Fifty-fifth annual report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries for the year 1921-22.—Hon. Mr. Lapointe.

Return of leases of wharves, piers and breakwaters.—Hon. Mr. Lapointe.

Return of tolls and dues of government harbours, etc., for the year 1921.—Hon. Mr. Lapointe.