

February 17, 1871

Parliament. Up to the close of last session no statement was made as to any change in the relations between England and Canada on the subject of her defence. Immediately after the country was startled by the removal of the troops. No one would desire their retention here for the mere purposes of the colonies. If kept, they ought to be strictly kept for Imperial purposes. For local purposes we should supply the whole means of defence. But the circumstances which justified the proposal to remove the greater part of the troops were suddenly altered by the recurrence of the Fenian raid, in the repulsion of which the troops were extremely valuable as coadjutors of our Militia. The order for their withdrawal within a few hours after the repulse of the Fenians certainly excited a strong feeling of uneasiness throughout the country. He believed that the Government, perceiving the existence of this uneasiness, desired to have explanations respecting the recall of the troops from the Imperial Government—at least the papers so stated—and hence the mission of Mr. Campbell to England.

He (Hon. Sir A.T. Galt) desired to know Mr. Campbell's instructions, and the result of his mission. His return was followed by steps in direct contravention of the agreement made in 1865 with the Imperial Government. A transfer of the forts and military material was made to the Colonial Government. Guns and other war-like necessaries were shipped to England in violation of the agreement that the armament for our fortifications should be provided at her expense. The defence of the country was, of course, rendered more difficult by the removal of those materials. We have not ourselves large military stores in our possession; nor was it expected we should have. Their renewal materially affected the ability of this country to defend itself. He thought there must have been explanations required and given with regard to the causes that lead to the adoption of that policy. However, notwithstanding the many reasons for the stationing of a military force for a time at Red River, within a few days after the arrival of the expedition there, it was withdrawn. Was it with the recommendation of the Canadian Government?

The article in *Blackwood* on this expedition has received a good deal of attention from its supposed origin with the distinguished commander of that force. He (Hon. Sir A.T. Galt) would not have noticed it but for this circumstance, and the gross injustice therein done the public men and people of Canada. Its language was a malicious slander upon them, as none could fairly say that a colonial politician was a synonym for a corrupt individual. He could not believe the commander of the expedition guilty of such an insult and slander unless confronted by the clearest proof. The correspondence he asked for should show why this change of policy had taken place; why the troops had been withdrawn, and were we expected to complete these fortifications, and generally why the engagement of 1865, that all the resources of the Empire would be employed in our defence, should have been modified. If the government possessed this information they were bound to give it to the public, that everyone might know whether, hereafter, as some in high places in England alleged, the defence of this country was to be confined to naval efforts. This was the statement attributed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

He (Hon. Sir A.T. Galt) was sorry to say he thought the course taken towards these colonies indicated that that was the policy of the Imperial Government, and could not believe our Ministers ignorant of what it intended doing in this respect; and, if so informed, he asked the papers for the purpose of relieving the minds of the people on the subject. If, on the other hand, the Imperial Government did not entertain such a policy for the defence of Canada, we were entitled to know it at the earliest possible day.

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER thought it was well that the motion included a reference to the defence of Canada, as that formed a part of the mission of the Hon. Mr. Campbell to England. He would take this opportunity to make a few remarks on the question of defence, and the position of the Imperial Government thereon. The agreement between the Imperial Government and Canada, as laid down in the despatch of the 17th of June, 1865, still existed, and was in force. That despatch did not touch the question of the number of troops left in this country. Since it was sent, in furtherance of the policy of the Imperial Government to concentrate the army, the troops had been withdrawn from Canada. The despatches from the Imperial Government would be brought down, in which the Imperial Government gave the assurance that the policy of withdrawal of the troops was intended for times of peace, and that in case of war England would continue to regard it as her duty to defend Canada as a portion of the British Empire.

Mr. JONES (Leeds North and Grenville North) said that all the recent acts of Great Britain—her whole policy, in fact—showed there was no disposition whatever to abandon her responsibility for the defence of Canada. This discussion was therefore quite irrelevant, it being calculated to throw injurious doubts on Britain's intentions and immemorial policy.

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STANDING COMMITTEES

On motion of **Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD**, a special committee was appointed to prepare and report lists of members to comprise the select standing committees ordered by the House. The committee was with few exceptions the same as that of last year.

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MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

A message was read from His Excellency, announcing the appointment of Hon. Mr. Howe in the room of Hon. Mr. McDougall, to act with Mr. Speaker as Commissioner under the provisions of the Act respecting the internal economy of the House.

The House adjourned at 5 o'clock, till Monday next.