

(March 10th, 1913.)

Canada and the Navy.

By Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING.*

AT a regular luncheon of the Canadian Club held on the 10th March, Hon. Mr. King said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—When my friend, Dr. Colquhoun, said to you that he labored under the difficulty of having been a personal friend of mine for a number of years, he had in mind that friendships often beget difficulties; in fact I sympathize with him, because I find at this moment my difficulties arising out of the circumstance that I have many personal friends in this audience, who are political opponents, and I have a knowledge of the purposes of the Canadian Club, and am anxious in the course of my remarks not to offend my friends even in argument, and to keep within the lines of the Canadian Club addresses.

I feel some relief in the mention of the circumstance that Mr. Meighen is to speak to you next week, Mr. Meighen will doubtless speak from one point of view, my point of view will be the other; at the same time I should like to deal with the subject allotted from the standpoint of broad, national considerations, irrespective, if possible, of party politics. But I am afraid I see national considerations somewhat in the light of the view taken by the party to which I belong. However, I shall try to direct your attention to certain phases of the subject without laying special emphasis on the one party point of view.

I will not go into the question as to whether an emergency exists or not, or as to whether the issue has arisen out of party exigencies. All that kind of argument can be left to other places and times, but I would like to raise one or two questions of another kind for your careful consideration.

First, what are the obligations of a Ministry in the matter of carrying out a line of policy dictated by a resolution of the House of Commons? I should like you to consider that, wholly irrespective of the question at issue at the present moment. We all know that when a statute is enacted Parlia-

* The Honorable William Lyon Mackenzie King, C.M.G., P.C., was Minister of Labor in the Laurier Cabinet. He is a fair example of a young Canadian who has risen to high position by his own efforts.

ment expects the people of Canada to obey its provisions. When a resolution of Parliament sets forth a line of policy does it not devolve upon the Ministry of the day, no matter what its political complexion, to carry out the line so dictated? I would like to raise that question in your minds, and will leave it to constitutional lawyers to answer it.

So long as a resolution is on the records of Parliament requiring a Ministry to do a particular thing, it seems to me the Ministry should either carry out that resolution, or cause the resolution to be rescinded, or appeal to the people with another line of policy, giving reasons for the change of policy. But so long as a resolution remains, I think the Ministry should be bound by that mandate. I hope this is not a controversial question. It may be that a Canadian Naval service is going to be Mr. Borden's policy at the present time. But that raises another point for consideration which is, that no Ministry should leave room for doubt as to what is to be its permanent policy. I think every Ministry on a question affecting the future of a country and possibly the Empire as a whole, can not come out too much into the open, or make too clear its policy in its every bearing, and disclose every important consideration in connection with the policy which it presents.

The next point I ask you to consider is the obligation imposed upon a nation from the point of view of national honor, of carrying out agreements and undertakings which it may enter into, or which may be entered into, if not in a formal manner, at least in a manner which at the time gives reason to believe that the obligations assumed will be discharged.

As I think everyone knows, the decision to establish a Canadian naval service was unanimously arrived at by the House of Commons in March, 1909; and as a result of this resolution a conference was held in England in the summer of 1909 with members of the British Admiralty and representatives of other self-governing Dominions. A Conference on military and naval defence, a subsidiary conference of the Imperial Conference, was summoned by His Majesty's Government to consider, what the outlying Dominions should do in consequence of the unanimous resolution of the House of Commons of Canada, of a similar resolution from Australia, and of an offer of naval assistance by New Zealand. Representatives of all these countries met, and a copy of the proceedings sets out the work of that conference. Just to refer to one clause; the Admiralty in announcing the forthcoming

conference, said it was called "to determine the form in which the Dominions could best participate in the burden of Imperial defence."

The conference was called with special reference to Canada, and the proposals of New Zealand and Australia. Briefly the results were: Australia was to begin a naval service of her own; Canada was to begin a naval service of her own; New Zealand was to adopt the plan of contribution to Britain of money, in return for which Britain was to furnish ships to be placed in New Zealand waters. Australia was to begin the best naval service she could along the lines suggested. The Canadian Government was also to begin the construction of the best naval service it could along the lines agreed to by Canadian Ministers in conjunction with the British Admiralty. No one thought of anything else, when the Conference was over, but that this Dominion would proceed forthwith and make a beginning in the organization of a Canadian Naval Service. You may take whatever view you please as to the wisdom of the course decided upon; that is open to debate: I admit that there are arguments to be urged for centralization in defence, but while I admit this, there is, I think, more to be said in favor of co-operation. But the point is, this country undertook in conference with New Zealand, Australia, and the British Government, to do a particular thing, and arrived at a conclusion unanimously. Is there nothing in the nature of national honor which helps to bind this country to the carrying out of that particular obligation?

Only a few weeks ago, press despatches came from the Australian office in London, saying that Senator Pearce, Minister of Defence of Australia, objected to Australia being represented on any Council in England, which was consultative and advisory only, as the Government of Australia did not see any advantage to be derived therefrom, and the despatch went on to represent the Australian Minister as saying: "When we entered upon the policy of having a naval service of our own, it was agreed that Canada was to do the same. We would like to know how is Canada going to carry out her part of the undertaking?" There is a consideration which affects the honor of this whole country! It may be Mr. Borden's intention ultimately; but I say no Ministry should leave any doubt for one moment as to the intention of Canada to fulfil her part of any undertaking entered into. You cannot make a united Empire if you leave room for doubt and quibbling. It is important that this be made clear in the interests of the whole Empire.

I may say Australia has carried out the policy agreed on. She began in the fall of 1910 and in September of last year, King George himself gave the royal impress of approval to that service by allowing it the title of "The Royal Australian Navy." There is a naval service started by Australia herself, under the control of the Australian Government, and the King of England to-day gives his approval to that service. When we discuss this question, that surely dismisses at one stroke the kind of argument that would suggest that a Canadian naval service means separation. If a country like Australia does not fear in having a navy of her own that her loyalty will be called in question, surely it is belittling the high position of the people of this country to let a suggestion be uttered from any side that in having a naval service of her own Canada's loyalty will be called in question!

I may mention further that this Royal Australian Navy has received another mark of endorsement from high authority. Let me read one paragraph from the Memorandum from the British Admiralty on the General Naval Situation presented to Parliament in December last. Section 7 says:

Further, at the present time and in the immediate future, Great Britain still has the power, by making special arrangements and mobilizing a portion of her reserves, to send, without courting disaster at home, an effective fleet of battleships and cruisers to unite with the Royal Australian Navy and the British squadrons in China and the Pacific for the defence of British Columbia, Australia and New Zealand. And these communities are also protected and their interests safeguarded by the power and authority of Great Britain so long as her naval strength is unbroken.

Look at that paragraph! In the first place, it disposes of all idea of an emergency. Great Britain can "without courting disaster" send ships out of her waters to go to the defence of other parts of the Empire. But I want to direct the attention of my fellow Canadians throughout this Dominion to another aspect: we are told that the defence of our country is dependent upon the Royal Australian Navy; that British Columbia must look to the Royal Australian Navy in considering its defence! Would we not as Canadians feel a little prouder if there were a Royal Canadian Navy to safeguard the defence of our own coasts, and to go to the assistance of Australia in time of need? Canada dependent on Australia! I say it is time, if we in this country want to

continue to boast of our greatness as a nation, that we should remove a reproach of that kind, and begin to build up a service of our own, which could co-operate with other services of the Empire in going to the assistance of any part in time of danger.

The third point is a question I have not seen much discussed, but it seems to me one for Canadians to consider: have we—this is a question for constitutional lawyers—have we authority, have we power, under the British North America Act, to legislate on any matter of defence for parts of the British Empire other than Canada? Do not let me be misunderstood: the Parliament of Canada can vote a sum of money for any purpose it pleases, granting an emergency, as in the South African War; but if the intention is to plan something as a permanent part of the country's work, you have to consider the limitations of the British North America Act. Section 91 says: "It shall be lawful for the King, with the advice of the Senate and the House of Commons to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Canada," in relation to certain specified matters, which include militia, the military and naval service, and defence. The point I would make is this: it seems to me that the Bill before the House of Commons at the present time, the proposal which the Government has brought down, goes beyond that. The British North America Act, at the time it was framed, did not contemplate the legislating on matters beyond Canada altogether. The Bill brought down does not have relation to the "peace, order and good government of Canada," but to "the peace, order, and good government of the Empire." That purpose may be right enough. It may be, Canada should work to that end. But I contend that before that step can be taken, with due regard to the Constitution as it is to-day, we ought to get the powers of Parliament enlarged in a way to enable us without any doubt to legislate in that direction. I believe, if you study what was in the minds of the men framing the British North America Act, you will find that they did not think they were framing a constitution for the Empire, but for Canada. It might be that a broader constitution is now necessary; it may be that we shall have a constitution for the Empire some day—I am one who hopes to see a development in all that pertains to the welfare of the British Empire—but I do not believe that the development will be helped by taking an unauthorized step in advance; by working out an Imperial constitution by breaking our own! Let us begin by educating the people of

this country to a sense of the possibilities of this wider field of action. But if we want to enter this wider arena, let us first obtain the power, so we can legislate on matters beyond our own Dominion. An Imperial Statute might confer on the Canadian Parliament the necessary powers, or an Imperial Parliament might enact the necessary legislation. But the B. N. A. Act as it stands, is, as its name implies, an Act relating to British North America, not to the British Empire.

The difference is brought out in the titles of the two measures. The Act of 1910 was an Act "respecting the Naval Service of Canada," the Bill at present before Parliament is entitled "A Bill to authorize measures for increasing the effective Naval forces of the Empire." You can make a Canadian naval service as efficient as you like, and do as you please respecting it, as long as it is controlled by Parliament; but when you begin legislating in a broad way upon the naval affairs of the Empire, it seems to me you are going beyond the powers of the Constitution. I may be wrong, but take your minds away altogether from the question of the navy, and apply this thought to any other question—immigration for example, and it will become apparent that the British North America Act never contemplated going outside Canada even as respects the naval power and authority of Britain.

As we study the present proposals and see what they involve the wisdom of the limitation upon our legislative authority will become apparent. Mr. Borden in 1910 moved a certain amendment, to ask Parliament to vote a contribution of money or of ships to be placed at the disposal of the British Admiralty, I think he emphasized rather that money be given. Let me say, I agree with the principle absolutely; if there is an emergency, give money to the people who need it, and let them spend it in the manner that will best meet the situation. But the emergency does not exist: there is no doubt about that, and the ground has shifted from the idea of a gift to the question of ownership. To-day the proposal is not to give England money or even to give ships outright, but ships, which the one who gives shall own, and yet not be responsible for. The proposal is to make to England what looks like a gift, but in reality only places at her disposal certain instruments of war which we shall own.

Thirty-five million dollars is proposed to be spent on the three most powerful battleships in the world, but the ownership of them is to remain with Canada. That raises questions we cannot disregard, one of an ethical nature: it is pro-

posed to build the three most powerful battleships that science can build or money supply, and Canada is to own them: is that the ideal we should place before this young nation? At this stage of our National development is that the means we propose to take of inculcating ideas as to the part which Canada is to play in furthering ideas of world peace? It is a tremendous responsibility to foist upon a young industrial peace-loving nation the ownership of the three most powerful engines of destruction in the world; let us begin in a modest way, not seek to surpass the nations of Europe, Germany, France, Britain and all the other nations on earth in our paraphernalia of war. I say we should have a higher ideal than that! There are other ways of helping the Empire! My mind does not run in the lines of war; my mind runs rather along the lines of peace. (Applause.) And what is going to help best to maintain peace. If this were an age such as the Middle Ages, when society was organized on a militarist basis, it might be different; but we shall, I hope, find it better for a young community, in this age of industrialism, to seek other ideals than outrivalling the world in battleships. I think it points in the wrong direction. We hear spread-eagleism sometimes condemned: there is just a little too much of that sort of thing in the suggestion that we should possess the three largest of anything in the world!

Then as to ownership. If this proposal is carried out, we are to own the three largest battleships in the world, but are not to control them; we are told that they are to be placed in the battle line of the Empire; we don't know where, but at any rate, they will not be under the control of the people or the Parliament of this country. You cannot divorce ownership and the object owned; this country is to remain owner of these three mightiest instruments of war, and its Parliament at the same time is to have absolutely no say as to what shall be done with them. Mr. Borden says we should not take any part in Imperial wars until we get a voice in Imperial affairs. That is good sound logic. But what Mr. Borden is proposing, is the very thing he says should not be done. By placing at the disposal of the British Admiralty three of the largest ships of war in the world, we are irrevocably drawn into every conflict of the Empire into which these ships may be brought, and yet shall have absolutely no voice in the policy responsible for the outbreak, or for any situation which may arise. It is quite conceivable that England, through her alliances may be

drawn into conflicts in Europe or elsewhere, or on account of her understandings with Russia, France, and other Powers. The three largest battleships are likely to be kept in the war zone wherever it may be. If England, not of her own accord, but because of her understandings with other Powers, should get into a conflict, then these vessels, which Canada owns, would be at once precipitated into that struggle. Isn't it conceivable, that England might not wish to have her outlying Dominions drawn into such a struggle? Yet we certainly would be, with the ownership of those ships, and their identification with this country by the names given them.

What is further involved in the proposal? With the rivalries of armaments in Europe, England has realized that it would be a relief to be freed from part of this stress of competition. Within the last little while she has made overtures to her neighbor across the Channel, saying, "If you go on building battleships we will go on, but if you stop we will stop." That proposal is beginning to bear fruit. But what is the suggestion now? These three greatest instruments of destruction are to be in addition to any program Great Britain may deem sufficient, in other words we are precipitating into the European situation something tending to complicate it: we are provoking the very kind of trouble which it should be the highest duty of statesmanship to avoid! These are questions I think we as Canadians cannot be indifferent to.

If we are making a gift, it should be a gift outright. Let England own the ships and be responsible for her policy, and for whatever may be the outcome of her action, respecting the property she owns. But when we give a thing and still say we own it, how is it to do credit to either party to the arrangement? Certainly I should not feel very proud were I to meet an Englishman in London and know that in his mind was the thought, "A loyal people you are! you say you give us three ships and yet say you own them!" It is not dignified. It is not worthy of Canada, either let us give the thing outright, or else keep it and take responsibility with ownership!

The question of the advisability of making so radical a departure from the course all along pursued in defence is another point to consider. Canada at Confederation had to choose between contribution and maintaining her own forces for land defence. The suggestion was made that the country pay for its defence by contribution, but the Fathers

of Confederation said, "No, we will undertake to spend at least a million dollars a year on our own militia; Britain may send troops in addition if she thinks we need troops." She did and maintained garrisons at Halifax, Quebec, Winnipeg, Esquimalt and elsewhere. In the Red River rebellion, one-third of the force was British. In the Northwest Rebellion many of the officers were British, the rest were Canadian. Then came the war in the Soudan, and it was proposed that Canada send troops; but the Government of the day said, "No, we are under no obligation to send men to take part in the wars of European nations." That was not because of disloyalty. No man will say that Sir John A. Macdonald was not a loyal British citizen. But it was because Sir John believed, that Canada should determine the part she would take, and could see no obligation upon this country to participate in that war that he refused to permit it.

We have greatly relieved England of the obligation of defence. Esquimalt and Halifax, the last of the British garrisons in Canada, have been taken over by the Canadian Government, and Canada to-day is the only part of the British Empire on which the British Exchequer is not spending money specifically for defence. In the case of Australia, the United Kingdom is still contributing out of her taxes for ships to be placed and maintained in Australian waters. In the case of New Zealand, the British taxpayer pays in part for ships to be placed in her waters. The same is true of defence in South Africa. Don't think for a moment that England is doing nothing for us to-day. We owe everything to England, and cannot do too much in return where the need exists. But we shall not make ourselves more loyal Britishers or Imperialists by being untrue to what we have done ourselves. Canada has met out of her own treasury for sometime past the whole expense of defence on land. What defence on sea may be needed will come in time. There are at present no ships stationed in our waters. England is paying for none, we are paying for none; why should we not begin to meet any need by extending the obligation of defence already assumed, from defence of land to defence of the coasts by a naval service? Why not extend to sea along the constitutional lines laid down by the British North America Act in respect of which there can be no question, the obligation of defence which we have so well assumed, and so well carried out on land?

How has the assumption of our own defence on land worked out in the interests of the Empire? During the South African war we were able to send fully equipped regiments of infantry, cavalry and artillery, which rendered splendid service on those distant battle fields. Do you think if at that time we had had a system of contribution, and we had had this country filled with British troops, this young nation would have been able to respond as she did? If that has been the history of land defence, why not look forward to a future equally satisfactory in naval defence? To my mind, the glory of the British Empire and its true greatness will lie in the fact that when the Mother Country fears danger at home she will not have her anxiety increased by the thought of the insufficient protection of her outlying Dominions and possessions, but will gain a sense of new security in the knowledge that in the North Atlantic, and the South Pacific, in whatever quarter of the globe her Dominions are, from thence will arise to meet any threatening power, the might of the young nations in their newly acquired strength, rising as it were out of the several oceans of the world, each in the pride of its own national spirit, and all enthused with the ardor of sharing the common glory of one Crown and one flag! That, to my mind, gentlemen, as a young Canadian, is the ideal of defence towards which we should strive in the British Empire! (Applause.)

Think what it was a few centuries ago, in the time of the greatness of the Roman Empire. Rome with her centralized powers had her governors send back to Rome the taxes of her subject peoples. The Roman Empire has disappeared and passed into history. Contrast with that the scene at the Coronation of King George V. familiar to us all. From Canada, Australia, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa, came, not the appointed proconsuls of Britain, but the elected representatives of these young free nations, not with taxes grudgingly given by dependent peoples, but to assemble around a newly crowned Sovereign and tell him how he might maintain his throne in security by ever seeking to preserve the liberties of his people. There was a picture of empire the like of which this world has never hitherto known. In this work of Empire building, we must choose frankly between increasing centralization, and, in the words of Lord Milner, establishing "new centres of strength." If we build up a strong Australia, a strong New Zealand, a strong Canada, and a strong South Africa, then with a strong United Kingdom we may not have the most

highly centralized machinery of destruction in the universe, but we shall have a group of communities, loving liberty because enjoying liberty, loving freedom because sharing freedom, and a bulwark of defence of freedom stronger and more far-flung than anything hitherto known, and, in this united strength, the greatest agency for peace, progress and the furtherance of righteousness among men and nations this world has ever known. (Long applause.)