

(September 29)

The Impending Naval Crisis.

BY MR. CARLYON BELLAIRS.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject of "The Impending Naval Crisis," Mr. Carlyon Bellairs, ex-M.P., said:

Gentlemen,—Your chairman referred to the fact that you had been fortunate in securing several visitors from over the water to address you. I don't know about that. The situation, you know, is a bit peculiar. We all come here to seek information, but we are waylaid and called upon instead to impart it, whether we will or not.

That is the position in which I find myself at the present moment. Well, I have cast discretion to the four winds, in bowing to the inevitable, in attempting to prophesy without knowing. I, at least, propose to give you my view.

I believe that the world is in for a crisis—a world crisis—about the year 1914. All conditions, I think, point to that conclusion. The reasons are many, both direct and indirect. Among the indirect reasons may be mentioned the growth of Socialism in Germany. The Austrian-Hungarian agreement also ends in 1915, and any movement resulting from its termination will be felt a year in advance. The German army, it is fair to assume, is being fashioned for war at a definite date in that it is being financed with borrowed money, and the whole preparations will reach maturity about 1914. There is also another issue that is likely to have an important bearing upon conditions. The Japanese alliance ends in 1915, and the termination of that alliance is likely to be anticipated.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, speaking at Vancouver, I believe, is quoted as having said that the Japanese alliance had proved of great importance in protecting the frontier of India against Russian aggression, and that this was the viewpoint of the whole British Empire. Now, I do not think that Britain depends upon the Japanese alliance for the defence of the Indian frontier. Would not any man preferred to have said:

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The protection and defence of the Indian frontier from 1914 would be largely in the three great transcontinental railways ready to carry British and Canadian troops to its defence.

Conditions are such generally that they cannot be treated in a piecemeal or parochial way. It is not a question for England alone, but for England and the Empire. England depends absolutely on her freedom and control of travel on the great sea roads. Canada, with her great railways, east to west, depends on this trade across the seas. No Monroe doctrine will defend shipping and trade, upon which England and the Empire is dependent. Canada cannot afford to be a parasite, groping her way through the musty records of the ancient Monroe doctrine.

History teaches that our army has nearly always fought abroad, that the soldier has had to go to his work on the back of the sailor. Advocates of additional naval development are told that the financial strain is too great. This is not so. Under the circumstances we can stand more. It is not one hundred years ago since the French revolutionary war. One hundred millions would not have been too great a sum for the French at that time to spend in bringing the supremacy of Napoleon to an end. Let me assure you of this: the people will not bobble over a few millions spent in Dreadnoughts to prevent war altogether.

The crisis of 1914 should be met by preparations in 1910. It should be met by the immediate inauguration of an aggressive constructive policy. A ship-building programme on a large scale should be launched. The navy saved a war during the Fashoda period. War was averted by the preparations of four years before. Again, at the outset of the South African war the South African Republic telegraphed Berlin asking assistance, but the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied that while the South African Republic had the sympathy of Germany, Germany could not interfere, as England was in command of the sea. This was the result of spending money on naval development in previous years. It was the second time in recent years that the navy has saved the Empire from war.

The situation which confronts Britain to-day is grave. Even Mr. Asquith confessed that it was a most unexpected state and condition of affairs. Germany has overtaken us in the rapidity of their building, and she has already caught us in respect to gun mountings. The remedy is immediate ordering of Dreadnoughts. The congestion of the building programme of 1911 will not rescue us from our undesirable posi-

tion in 1914. Germany is laying down ships at an unusually rapid and significant rate. According to the present programme, 1914 will find Germany with 21 Dreadnoughts and Invincibles, as compared with Britain's 24. The margin, I say, leaves nothing to effect the reinforcement of the Pacific upon the termination of the Japanese alliance, to provide for the fleet of the Mediterranean, and to make provision for refitting and risk of accidents in navigation. There is no margin of safety. The policy of England involves the necessity of keeping considerable of her fleet at sea, and constant risks are involved from mines and torpedos, while units of the fleet must frequently be laid up coaling and refitting. In the day of battle, England should be able to meet Germany's 21 vessels with 33, instead of only 24.

This congestion of building, to which I have alluded, has been brought about by procrastination, and it is now certain that 1911 cannot come to the rescue. I believe absolutely that the year 1914 will see the crisis. Six times already has England been the break-water to turn back the aspirations of one ruler struggling after world supremacy and world domination. We have got to see to it that Germany doesn't make the seventh, the successor of Philip of Spain, Louis XIV or Napoleon as would-be ruler of the world. In season and out we must be up and doing. Our naval supremacy must be maintained unchallenged. First we must make sure of our navy, and second we must make sure of our army and military forces. We must be ready to mobilize whenever required. The present chief military member of council testified before the War Commission that in the South African war, 680 out of 750 of our military were organized purely for local defence. We have ten men in goal and only one forward. It ought to be the other way about. It is always a foolish policy to spend money on luxuries and starve for necessities.

Then there is Mr. Haldane's army scheme. Napoleon, you remember, said it took seven years to create an army. That being the case I am somewhat sceptical when the Secretary for War undertakes to create an army in six speeches. The territorial army scheme provides for an expenditure on an army, which could not be moved, of a sum equivalent to the cost of thirteen Dreadnoughts. It would have been better, in my opinion to have spent a portion of this money on seven new Dreadnoughts. Seven additional Dreadnoughts would determine the issue of peace or war in 1914.

The question arises: Why are the facts not faced by the Cabinet, and why is the navy not put in such a position as to

put a stop to all alarmist feeling. As a matter of fact, the Empire cannot get directing from some twenty-seven men gathered in a room. It has been said that the greater number of wise men there are assembled together the less wisdom is obtained. But it is of vital importance that some mind should gain the ascendancy and focus our policy upon sane lines. Lord Melville once said of Cabinets: "It doesn't matter what they say in the room so long as they all agree to say the same thing out of the room." Another observation which has been much quoted was the counsel, "We must hang together, lest we hang separately."

Two maxims might well inspire the present Cabinet. All cabinets are confronted with such difficulties in these matters. The Unionist cabinet of 20 would fail—as it did fail in the South African war—to adequately direct the affairs of Empire. There is necessity for a better basis of Government. There should be a radical change in the construction and constitution of Parliament. Local and parochial issues should not be permitted to monopolize the attention of imperially-minded men. As a result of the existing condition we have to contend with the influence of the little Englander. Although relatively these little Englanders are a small class, they occasionally succeed in getting into Parliament, where they have opportunity to become rampant. The little Englander directs all eyes inward to our littleness, instead of directing all eyes outward to our bigness. He is not representative, but he gets in on local issues. What we want is to get some system of parliamentary government in Britain, such as you have here in Canada in which the federal and provincial governments are both allocated their jurisdiction. In an imperial parliament devoted to imperial affairs the little Englander would never get in at all.

The most important question to us is to get rid of the little England sentiment. You can't bring him out here to learn, but you can change the constitution of parliament and alter the existing system of government. In this connection you members of the Canadian Clubs can do much. We like to have Canadian speakers visit the mother land and talk to us and give us the Canadian view. We would like you to preach the doctrine of British preference in all matters of trade.

Let me say one thing to you before I close. There is no decadence in England among the people. When we raise alarms about Germany we do not distrust or doubt the people. We distrust the Cabinet and the little Englander. In a Parlia-

ment devoted to Imperial issues the little Englisher would not be present. The people themselves are imperially-minded. It is owing to having old machinery of government that the little Englisher exercises disproportionate influence. It is the man behind the gun who counts. It is the man behind the gun in the navy. It was the man behind the gun who won Trafalgar. The men are all right and perfectly certain. If only given the weapons they will present you with victory as Nelson did in the past.

Britain must move forward. She must improve her system of government. She would do well to model a system somewhat upon that of the confederated Provinces of Canada. She wants less of the bureaucratic love for water carts and wants to look more to her powder carts. She has her opportunity. Her people are all right. It is after all the people's battle and it is worth while.

In concluding let me make application to you for assistance. We would like any of you who are willing to come to England and tell us concerning Canadian opinion. Canadian opinion is valued in England, for we want Canadians to stand with us shoulder to shoulder in an effort to stiffen the backs of the leaders of public opinion in England. Thus we can be assured of development and progress, of building up an even greater Empire than we have to-day.