

Sir Wilfrid Strongly Urges An Appeal to the People

Eloquent Speech by the Great Liberal Chieftain in Reply to Premier Borden--The Senate Has Defended the Rights of the People---Borden Challenged to Submit Naval Bill to the Electorate---The Nationalists Scored

Speaking in Parliament on the last day of the session in reply to Premier Borden, Sir Wilfrid Laurier said: "Though my honorable friend certainly did his very best to be severe towards the Canadian Senate he must be the first to admit that his efforts in that direction have fallen far short of the performance of the press which supports him."

"To read the Ministerial press, one would suppose that the Senate had committed some great error, almost akin to a crime. Sir the truth is that the Senate has done nothing but defend the rights of the Canadian people, and if I may follow my Right Honorable friend in the line of argument, which he has introduced, I might say that the Senate has done nothing but defend the rights of the people against a servile majority in the House of Commons."

"What has the Senate done. Have they done violence either to the law or to the constitution? Have they infringed upon the rights of this House? Have they infringed upon the rights of the people? Have they in any way sacrificed the rights of the people? What have they done? They have simply provided that this resolution should be, not rejected as they might have done, but simply that they did not feel called upon to give it their assent until it was submitted to the judgment of the country."

EMERGENCY NEVER EXISTED

"Sir, this contribution was introduced by my Right Honorable friend under the pretence of an emergency which never existed. This contribution the Senate would have been well justified in throwing aside, but they would not take that course."

Mr. Lancaster: "How do you know? Sir Wilfrid Laurier: 'How do I know? I know by the resolution placed upon the books. They did not say they would not give their assent to this bill. They simply said that this House is not justified in giving its assent to this Bill until it is submitted to the judgment of the country. This, Sir, is the resolution which my Right Honorable friend has the audacity to characterize as partisan."

"My Right Honorable friend says that the Senate acted at my dictation. My Right Honorable friend mistakes my friends and those whom I claim to be my followers in this chamber or in the other chamber. Canadian Liberals whether they sit in the House of Commons or in the Senate do not follow the dictation of anybody. I have seen instances in this House within the last three or four days where honorable gentlemen supporting my Right Honorable friend have been dragged after a caucus to give a vote that they did not want

to give, but nothing of that kind has ever happened to any follower of mine."

SENATE CONSTITUTION

"My Right Honorable friend says that the Senate should be reformed. It is up to him to do so. He is in office now. He has the power to do so. I have myself stated over and over again that the constitution of the Senate, nominative as it is was not altogether satisfactory. The difficulty has always been to find a remedy."

"My Right Honorable friend perhaps will be as good as his word, the brave word he has given today, and let us have a reform of the senate. If he will do so I shall be willing to give my assent, but according to the views of my Right Honorable friend the reform of the Senate is not to be based upon its constitution; it is to be based according to the manner in which the members of the Senate exercise their power. If the Senators are good boys, if they consent to be simply a recording machine to register the state and the will of the majority on that side of the House, then their very existence will be continued and maintained. They are a noble institution, but if they by the audacity to have a will of their own, to exer-

cise their own judgment and to exercise that judgment against the will of the majority of this House, down with them and anathema on them. That is the basis upon which the reform of the Senate is to be regarded."

URGES APPEAL TO PEOPLE

"But let me repeat. In the meantime let me repeat that the Senate simply asked that this bill should be referred to the people. My Right Honorable friend has given us what would be his action, that is to say his action is to be repetition of the majority. My Right Honorable friend forgets that according to all constitutional usage the way to get out of a difficulty of this kind, when there is a divergence of opinion between one branch, of the Legislature and the other branch is an appeal to the people. Yet my Right Honorable friend will not take that course. He says that he will repeat what he has done before, that he will ask the House again the \$35,000,000 for the emergency. He may do that, I do not pretend to be a prophet, but I say to my Right Honorable friend that according to all usages he should do what the Senate invites him to do, appeal to the one body which is the master of us all, and the arbiters of our destinies. He will not do so."

Mr. Lancaster: "They are not masters of the Senate."

"Not only according to constitutional usage," continued Sir Wilfrid, "but according to his own words this is what he was going to do. My Right Honorable friend has stated not once, not twice, but a dozen times, in Montreal, in this House and in Toronto that if Parliament were against the policy he would appeal from Parliament to the people. My Right Honorable friend I am sure will not deny that he has taken that position more than once. He will not deny that he stated that if Parliament were against him, and did not approve of his policy he would appeal to the people. But I understand the new constitutional doctrine which is to prevail. Parliament is no longer Parliament as we have known it in former years. It is not composed of the House of Commons and Senate. It is not composed of two branches of the legislature. Parliament is composed of the majority which sits in this House."

LIBERTY AS GIVEN BY MAJORITY

"Even ourselves we have only such liberty as the majority is good enough to leave us. That is parliament according to the doctrines of my right hon. friend, but that is not the way I understand the constitution."

"My right hon. friend says that he had received a mandate from the electors in the election of 1911. The statement of my right hon. friend that he had a mandate from the electors of 1911 on this question was made in the presence of the fact that he had by his side the hon. the post master general (Mr. Pelletier), which fact is an absolute negation of the proposition."

"The Conservative party in the election of 1911 were a unit upon the question of reciprocity; they were all alike. It was the same in one province as in another province; whether in the west or in the east; they were all united against reciprocity, but on the navy. To tell us that my right hon. friend had a mandate from the electors is to put a severe strain on our credulity."

"It is true that my right hon. friend stated in the elections of 1911, on the question of the navy, that we owed a debt to Great Britain. He was not satisfied with the manner in which we had performed our duty to the empire by the placing of the Naval Act upon the statute book but he wanted to do something in favor of Great Britain."

"Though by his side sits the post-master general, who stated that we owed no debt whatever to Great Britain, the hon. gentleman had the audacity--"

Hon. Mr. Pelletier: "Never." Sir Wilfrid Laurier: "Well, I will call upon my hon. friend to go and repeat in the Province of Quebec that he never said that."

Mr. Pelletier: "Never, never." Sir Wilfrid Laurier: "But we have more. We know that when the post-master general went to Quebec County for his re-election he stated that he had obtained from the prime minister a pledge that upon any naval expenditure he would have a plebiscite."

WHERE IS PEOPLE'S MANDATE.

"Where is the plebiscite and where is the mandate of the people for this expenditure of \$35,000,000? While my right hon. friend in the election of 1911 was preaching that we owed a debt to Great Britain, his supporters in Quebec--and I see one sitting behind him in this House--were paying for the circulation of Le Devoir and the apostles of Nationalism were preaching every day that we owed absolutely nothing to Great Britain and that they were against naval expenditure in any kind of form."

"I see in my presence a gentleman who paid for the circulation of Le Devoir and who will not deny it, I am sure."

"My Right Hon. friend went a little further at Toronto and took occasion to add a word or two to what he had previously said. And this is significant in view of the statement he made today. He stated at To-

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ronto that there was an emergency. An emergency? Does my Right Hon. friend pretend at this late date that there was an emergency? Will my Right Hon. friend tell me, or tell this House, that if there had been an emergency he would have been satisfied and the Canadian people would have been satisfied to send three empty ships to Great Britain? If there had been an emergency it would not have been three empty ships, but thousands of our young men, would have risen to offer their services to Great Britain. If there had been an emergency, from the shop, the farm, the lumber camp, the mining pit, our young men would have come forward have asked to be sent forward to take their places in the firing line.

PEOPLE WILL OFFER SERVICES

"My Right Hon. friend accused me the other day, in Toronto, of being a separatist. Let me tell him that I know the people of this country as well as, and perhaps better than, he does. Whenever there is an emergency the people will rise, as they did in 1899, to offer their services, not only ships and money, but the services of their bodies, and to put themselves in the front ranks, in order to take their share in the fray. "But there is no emergency whatever, and my Right Hon. friend has just given us the evidence that there is no emergency. He says, and we un-

derstand from the memo of Mr. Churchill, that was given to us, and from the statement which he made, that the effective forces of Great Britain could no longer carry the load along and that the three ships which we were to give were to be in excess of the number composing the British fleet, and that this \$35,000,000 would not form part of the British naval expenditure."

"Now we know that this was not an emergency contribution, but a contribution for the regular naval program of Great Britain. My Right Hon. friend has given the best proof possible that there was no emergency and I thank him for the statement. Besides, it shows that we were right from the first, in believing there was no emergency."

"My Right Hon. friend did more at Toronto. He added to the fallacy of the emergency another fallacy just as fantastic and for more mischievous and dangerous. My Right Hon. friend stated at Toronto that a Canadian navy was a separatist navy."

(Continued on page three)

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