

are not wholly sympathetic and anxious to do everything they can when the moment comes to relieve their position. While the severance of diplomatic relations might seem a small thing from one point of view, it would have very great significance, I believe, if the step were taken, particularly as between this country and France. There are embarrassments in the situation, but there are embarrassments in nearly every situation these days. I believe the good outweighs the possibilities of danger. As far as the minister at Ottawa is concerned, I am glad to hear my hon. friend refer to him as he does, because I can assure the hon. gentleman that not only has the minister been extremely conscientious, as far as I have been able to see, but I can say that in some difficult situations he has been very helpful.

As to the consuls, two of them are awaiting means of transportation to return to France. There are two former consuls who at the moment are at the legation, but they are taking charge only of some of the consular duties that still remain, though all the consulates have been closed; matters relating to the payment of pensions, dealing with estates, and so on. I do not think their presence here is an embarrassment to anyone.

Mr. COLDWELL: What recognition is given in Canada to the representatives of General de Gaulle? We have the legation representing Vichy. What recognition is given General de Gaulle and the free French, who are fighting with us?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend will recall that recently it was decided that additional recognition should be accorded the fighting French. Moreover, the fighting French are not technically a government at the present time. In the matter of any cooperation that may be effected between ourselves and any of the forces that are fighting the enemy, we are doing everything possible. There is, however, a difference in status at the present time between the fighting French and the countries grouped under the head of the United Nations. As I have said, the question of diplomatic recognition does not arise because the fighting French are not organized as a government.

Mr. COLDWELL: The thing that puzzles a great many people in Canada is this, that the French government at Vichy is obviously hostile to our cause; that is, if we listen to Pierre Laval. On the other hand, the free French, quite apart from personalities, are fighting by our side. In Canada we have the representative of the hostile government—I am putting it the way the public view it—and

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

apparently we give no recognition to the friendly forces who are fighting with us. It seems rather an anomalous position.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I would not say we give no recognition to them. We cooperate with them wherever it is possible. Certainly as far as the French government of Pierre Laval is concerned, we have no regard whatever for him. We look upon Pierre Laval as a mouthpiece of Germany, not of the French people, and that is taken into consideration notwithstanding the relations we are maintaining.

Mr. COLDWELL: Yet the representative of that government—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The minister is really the representative of the French people.

Mr. COLDWELL: But the minister here must act upon instructions received from the government headed by Pierre Laval.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Undoubtedly he does, but I question very much whether he receives any instructions which would cause him to create any embarrassment for us.

Mr. MacINNIS: I understand there is to be a meeting shortly in Washington of the pan-American economic conference. I wonder if the government of Canada has taken any further steps to become associated with the pan-American union. Both from the economic and from the political point of view I think connections and associations with the south American states, as well as with the United States, will become of increasing importance to Canada. I see no reason why, when peace is restored, trade between Canada and the countries of south America might not become of very great importance; and from the political point of view I think our association in a pan-American union is of definite importance. Has the government given any further consideration to membership in that union?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am sure my hon. friend will agree with me that the first consideration is to be invited to take part, and we have not been invited upon all occasions. In fact, there have been times quite recently when we might have expected invitations but were given reasons why it would not be advisable to have an invitation extended. That position still exists to a certain extent, for reasons which I cannot explain publicly, but of which I shall be glad to tell my hon. friend in private on another occasion. During this period of war there are special reasons why the south American republics and the United States might wish to discuss certain economic and other problems without having representation present from any member of