

complete confidence in our leaders; and if I cannot see eye to eye with them on a question which is purely a matter of administration and armaments, I remain deeply attached to their leadership. If I vote to-day against an increase in the estimates, and the future should prove me wrong, I shall be the first to admit it. Like the gentleman who preceded me, I hope the government will prove to be right, and I shall then make due apology.

Mr. WILFRID LACROIX (Quebec-Montmorency) (Translation): Mr. Speaker, I wrote the following letter to the right hon. the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) on December 31, 1936:

As a member of parliament, I take the liberty of making certain suggestions to you respecting military expenditures which, according to rumours, will show a substantial increase in the coming estimates.

I believe the province of Quebec would frown on this increase which would be interpreted as a direction from London.

Do you not think that our policy should aim at avoiding all participation in European wars, even if England were compelled to intervene in a conflict by reason of treaties or agreements that bind or may bind her to France and Belgium?

In order to avoid all misunderstanding, has the hour not arrived when we should hold a permanent seat in the Pan-American Conference? This gesture would indicate the part we mean to play in European conflicts in which England might be interested.

Should Canada not consider that the time has arrived when it should sever its connection with the League of Nations and study at the same time its status in the British Commonwealth. The fact that our King is the King of England should not imply that we must join in a war on the European or Asiatic continent or in any other quarter of the globe.

It is evident that if Canada clearly defines by legislative enactment its intention not to interfere in any war of the empire, such a course would free us, in the event of European or Asiatic difficulties, from the possibility of attack and would prevent all military expenditures both useless and disastrous for a young country such as ours.

I make these observations to you in a spirit of humility, as a Canadian who loves his country and as a Liberal trustful in the political wisdom of his party.

Please accept, Mr. Prime Minister, the expression of my deepest regards.

And the right hon. the Prime Minister wrote me the following reply on January 19, 1937:

I read with much interest your letter of December 31 respecting military expenditures and Canada's foreign policy.

With respect to expenditures having to do with defence, any expenditure contemplated and decided upon will as in the past relate to the defence of Canada. We consider that whatever action Canada will take in this regard is a matter to be determined by the Canadian

government and parliament, and our defence estimates were not discussed with London on this occasion any more than in any other circumstance.

The policy of our government is to strive by all possible means to avoid war. There exists a wide difference of opinion in Canada and in other countries as to the best way of achieving that end. As regards the League of Nations, I do not think it would be advisable to withdraw from that body which if properly developed can constitute a powerful agency for conciliation and peace throughout the world. I would prefer seeking the safeguards against the danger which you see in our relations with the League of Nations by calling it into play as an instrument of conciliation and study rather than as an instrument for the application of economic or military sanctions. I am pleased to forward you herewith a copy of the speech I delivered at Geneva during the last assembly; I believe it will clearly indicate to you the line of conduct suggested on subjects pertaining to the league and on other matters.

The matter of relationships to be established with the Pan-American Conference is an important question. We have given the matter attention but it involves more than one factor which must be taken into account.

I am pleased to know that you interest yourself in these important questions and I greatly value the clarity with which you have outlined to me the views you hold on the difficult situation that confronts us.

I do not want to question the words of the right hon. Prime Minister when he tells us:

We consider that whatever action Canada will take in this regard is a matter to be determined by the Canadian government and parliament.

I have faith in him and in his ministers, but I ask myself if the events that may occur following a declaration of war against the United Kingdom by any nation, will not be so swiftly moving in character that they will control government action in such a manner that parliament will find itself face to face with an accomplished fact and will be merely called upon to ratify an existing policy.

Moreover, were we not given a concrete example recently bearing out what I have just said, when, on the day following the abdication of King Edward the Eighth, the government by a mere order in council recognized his successor and set in motion the mechanism of the Statute of Westminster in such a manner that when parliament convened we had but one thing to do: approve what had been done.

As a matter of fact, I readily bow to the decision taken and approve whole-heartedly the order in council that gave us as successor to Edward the Eighth His Majesty George the Sixth; yet, when I analyse the events that followed one another at the time, I recall the words of Georges Sorel in a conversation captioned "Democracy is compelled to act