

Canada-U.S. Joint Committee

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, before saying a word about the important matter which the Prime Minister mentioned in concluding part of his statement, may I just say this with regard to the visit of Princess Margaret. I am sure that members of the house will have heard with great satisfaction the message she has sent. I can only add that I hope she derived as much pleasure out of her visit to Canada as those who had the honour and the privilege of meeting her derived from that meeting.

The decision of the government to name a mountain range after her was original and imaginative. Judging from Her Royal Highness's message, the fact that the mountain range is on Axel Heiberg island, which is some distance from the more settled parts of Canada, does not seem to have interfered with her appreciation of that unique distinction.

So far as the important statement made by the Prime Minister regarding what I hope will be the establishment on a continuing basis of contacts between the legislators of the United States and Canada is concerned, I might say that we in this party most warmly support such a move. I have personally felt for some time that the official contacts which have now been well established for many years on the executive and diplomatic levels between the two governments should be supplemented, although they could not of course be replaced, by this kind of joint legislative committee. That this should be done is particularly important, though it may add to our difficulties because of the fact that under the constitution of the United States the legislative branch does play a very important part within that country in a rather different way from that played by the parliament of Canada with respect to the development of foreign policy, in that in the United States the role of the legislative branch is almost, although not completely, an independent one.

I have found from personal experience in that field that the contacts between our two countries on the diplomatic and executive levels are not adequate to meet all the problems involved in relations between us. At the same time this will have to be worked out very carefully, because our formal and regular contacts will remain those between the executive branches and through the diplomatic channels of our two countries. I have also had some reason as a result of personal experience in this connection to appreciate the fact that in Washington efforts made on the diplomatic level to establish regular and more or less formal contacts with congress sometimes meet with a little suspicion from other branches of government.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

However, the Prime Minister has put forward proposals which would be very helpful in reaching this very important end. We think they are practical proposals for getting a start made on the Canadian side and, as I have said, we warmly support them.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): On behalf of this group, Mr. Speaker, and in response to the gracious message of the princess which was read by the Prime Minister, I want to say that we in the C.C.F. realize that the princess brought much happiness to many Canadians in her visit to Canada, a visit which was carried out with such charm, such distinction and such grace. We are also very pleased to hear that the government has decided to name a range of mountains in the Arctic after this most distinguished citizen of our commonwealth.

The leader of this group will deal with the other question raised by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was kind and considerate enough to telephone me this morning with regard to the resolution he has placed before the house. I want to say that the C.C.F. are very pleased that this move is being made. We feel that such a joint committee representative of both houses of parliament and, as the Prime Minister has said, representative of the executive and the congress of the United States is something that could achieve very great things for both our countries. We feel that in the matters of trade, tariffs and export policies generally there is room for discussion; we believe that from those discussions might come subsequent agreements which could result in the freeing of trade and an increase in the standards of living of both our peoples.

In respect to international affairs generally, we in this group have very often felt that we could not wholeheartedly follow the leadership, in certain instances, given to the western world by the United States. We realize, too, that the Canadian government very often questions some of the moves that are made in Washington. I am certain that this type of prior consultation will result in a more forward look and a more realistic policy being adopted by both our countries. We have had joint associations in the past which continue today; for example, the commonwealth parliamentary associations and the association of the members of the various parliaments connected with NATO. Now we have this further advance, and with you taking the leadership, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the House of Commons,