

States would not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil were threatened by any other empire. To this declaration I replied at Woodbridge, Ontario, two days later, that we too had our obligations as a good, friendly neighbour.

Our common problems of defence were discussed at length and in a more concrete and definite way when I visited Washington in November, 1938, to sign the new Canadian-United States trade agreement.

In the summer of 1939, the president paid a visit to Canadian waters off the Atlantic coast. He subsequently told me that this visit, like his similar visit to Victoria two years earlier, had been occasioned by his concern with the problem of coastal defence.

With the outbreak of war, the question of coast defences became of vital importance. At the same time, the fact that Canada was a belligerent and the United States a neutral complicated the problem of pursuing the discussions. In the face of the European menace it was obviously desirable to give expression to the needs of joint defence. To the means, however, of effecting this end, the most careful consideration had to be given in order that there might be no grounds for the belief that there was any attempt on Canada's part to influence the policies or to interfere in the domestic affairs of a neutral country. Had there not been, between the president and myself, complete confidence in each other's purpose and motives, I question if the situation could have been met without occasioning genuine embarrassment to one side or the other, if not indeed to both. Fortunately, in the light of our previous conversations, there was no danger of the position being misunderstood, and my visit with the president at Warm Springs, in April of the present year, afforded an exceptional opportunity for a careful review of the whole situation.

This is perhaps an appropriate place for me to say that, from the beginning, and at the time of each conversation, the president made it perfectly clear that his primary interest in the subject was the defence of the United States. I was equally frank in making it clear that my concern was the effective defence of Canada, and the defence of the British Commonwealth of nations as a whole.

If one thing above another became increasingly evident in the course of our conversations, it was that our respective countries had a common interest in the matter of the defence of this continent. Since this was the case, everything pointed to the wisdom of planning carefully in advance for whatever contingency might arise.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

The conversations begun between the president and myself before the war, in the direct manner I have described, and at Warm Springs taken up anew after Canada had entered the war, were supplemented as the weeks went by, by conversations conducted through diplomatic channels. Staff conversations followed in due course.

I should perhaps say that I gave to my colleagues who were members of the war committee of the cabinet my entire confidence with respect to the conversations I had had with the president, and subsequent steps were taken with their knowledge and full approval. I should also like to say that the British government was kept duly informed of what was taking place. The Canadian government likewise was kept informed of the defence matters directly discussed between the British government and the United States. The discussions naturally included questions pertaining to the leasing of air and naval bases on the Atlantic.

As I have already mentioned, the president had announced the day before our meeting at Ogdensburg that conversations had been taking place between the two governments. The Ogdensburg agreement formally confirmed what the previous conversations and planning had initiated. It made known to the world that plans of joint defence were being studied and worked out between the two countries. It did one thing more: It made clear that the board which was being established to make studies and recommendations was not being formed for a single occasion to meet a particular situation, but was intended to deal with a continuing problem. The board on joint defence was, therefore, declared to be permanent.

By a minute of council approved by His Excellency the Governor General on August 21, the establishment of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence was formally ratified and confirmed.

With the permission of the house, I should like to insert in Hansard a copy of the complete minute:

The committee of the privy council have had before them a report, dated August 20, 1940, from the Right Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, representing:

That on August 17, 1940, at the invitation of the President of the United States, he proceeded to the United States to Ogdensburg in the state of New York, to meet Mr. Roosevelt for the purpose of discussing mutual problems of defence in relation to the safety of Canada and the United States;

That conversations on this subject between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States, accompanied by the Secretary of State for War of the United States (Mr.