

Canada-U.S. Joint Committee

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-U.S.—PROPOSED JOINT CONGRESSIONAL-PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): I should like to refer to a matter that has received consideration generally in the house. During the past several months discussions have taken place, both here and in the United States, respecting a means of providing an opportunity from time to time for those who are engaged in the legislative aspects of government in the two countries to meet together and examine common problems, to exchange views and possibly make suggestions to their respective governments arising from these deliberations.

It is my understanding that action in this regard is going forward in the houses of the United States congress with evident support from all shades of political opinion. I have here the *Congressional Record* of July 17 containing a speech by United States Senator Neuberger with respect to this matter and the resolution which he introduced. This resolution provides for close relationship between the legislators of both countries, and section 7 says:

This resolution shall become effective, and a joint committee established, upon receipt by the president of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives of notification that a committee with similar functions and terms of reference has been established by the Canadian parliament.

It appears from the record that the proposals had the approval of the executive of the United States and of the President, who under the constitution is responsible for the conduct of foreign affairs.

I have been informed that in this country consideration has been given to this matter in the other place, and that a motion of this nature has there been looked upon favourably. I am not going to quote the resolution that was passed, except to say that it welcomed the recent suggestion of the Prime Minister of Canada for the establishment of joint parliamentary committees between Canada and the United States, and the opinion was that if such a committee were set up it would be of great benefit in improving relations between the two countries. The other place offered its co-operation toward this end.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) and the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue) both indicated on August 8 that they would give support to proposals along these lines. This morning I consulted with each of them by telephone, and it is my understanding that they are in accord with the procedure I am about to propose. If the house

generally indicates its agreement, I would suggest that we proceed along the following lines.

My proposal is that I should request the Speaker of this honourable house, in consultation with his colleague in the other place, to establish a committee of members of both houses and of all parties for the purpose of exploring jointly with appropriate representatives of the executive and legislative branches of the government of the United States the means whereby increased systematic discussions between legislators of the two countries on problems of common concern may be provided.

I would suggest that such assistance as may be appropriate and required for the purpose of implementing this proposal, if generally acceptable to this house, should be provided by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Smith) from his department, with co-operation from other departments of government as may be needed from time to time.

I feel that if this general proposal is accepted we shall be making an advance that will prove beneficial not only to the exchange of ideas as between legislators of our countries, but also that in their deliberations suggestions will be forthcoming which will be generally helpful and will assure that the best of relations continue in the years to come.

This is the first time that anything of this nature has come before this house in so concrete a form. I hope it will receive support. The other day when I was speaking I mentioned the occasion in 1942 when representatives of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States met here in room 16. It was the first time representatives of the United States had been present at a meeting of the Empire Parliamentary Association, as it was then known. The hon. member for Laurier will remember very well the deliberations that took place at that time and the extent to which, out of the community of counsel, agreements in principle as to courses generally beneficial to both countries and also to the commonwealth as a whole were arrived at.

Subsequently the hon. member for Laurier, Mr. M. J. Coldwell, Senator Vien and I went to Washington and there met with representatives of congress for a couple of days. Those were the first occasions on which the United States had at any time had representatives of congress meeting, as I said, with either Canadian legislators or representatives of the commonwealth. This course has since been followed to the manifest appreciation of those who have belonged to the several delegations, and also to the material benefit of our relations.