

REPORTING PARLIAMENT BRIEFLY

(C. W. B. May 14, 1948)

CANADA AT THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY MR. ST. LAURENT: In the House of Commons on May 11 Mr. Bracken asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. St. Laurent, in respect of press and radio reports that conversations between the United States and the Soviet Union might begin for a general settlement of outstanding differences, (1) whether Canada had been consulted or informed of the suggested United States action; and (2) whether Mr. St. Laurent was in a position to throw any further light on the proposal than the press and radio had given. Mr. St. Laurent replied as follows:-

"The short answer to the first question is no. As to the second question, I am not in a position to say what has appeared in the press or over the radio in this country. I have had no communication from any official sources, but have had the benefit of seeing dispatches from press correspondents, and the tone of those dispatches I think explains why it is that so far no official communication has come to us. Thus, the United States Ambassador, Walter Bedell Smith, said, according to the dispatches, that the Russian publication of his talks with the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov was a surprise to him because the talks were confidential. He is quoted as having said:

'Release of the notes by Moscow rather surprises me, as this is the first time they have done such a thing with a confidential exchange.'

'My understanding is that the Moscow radio has given out what is supposed to be almost the complete text of the conversations or notes between the United States Ambassador and the U.S.S.R. Foreign Minister, and the dispatches of the press correspondents which I have seen report a very interesting situation. It would not care to go beyond what is reported to have been said by someone speaking on behalf of the Foreign Office in London. The quotation is as follows:

'We were not consulted. The announcement was a complete surprise to us, but whether it is a pleasant surprise we cannot say until we have seen the full official text of the American and Soviet notes.'

"It is apparent from these dispatches there has been a slight misunderstanding over what was to be published about these conversations at this time. They are reported to have taken place just about a week ago. The subject matter is of great interest, and I hope that we shall in due course receive official information. As soon as I get any official information which may be of interest to hon. members I shall hasten to bring it before the House."

STATEMENT BY MR. ST. LAURENT: In the House of Commons on May 12 the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. St. Laurent, made a statement in reply to an inquiry by Mr. Cold-

well as to the appointment of a Canadian Ambassador to Moscow. The question and answer were as follows:-

Mr. COLDWELL: In view of official reports of important discussions between the United States and Russia, is the Government considering the advisability of appointing a new Ambassador to Moscow to ensure that in any discussions that may ensue in Moscow, and in which other countries may be invited to join, Canada will be enabled to participate at the appropriate level?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: There have been no official reports to the Government of Canada of discussions between the United States and Russia. Press correspondents' dispatches report Secretary of State Marshall as having said to a largely attended press conference this morning:

'This Government has no intention of entering into bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Government on matters relating to the interests of other Governments. The discussion of any proposals in regard to outstanding issues which the Soviet Government may have in mind must as a matter of course be discussed in the body charged with the responsibility for these questions.'

'I understand that in answer to a question subsequently he explained that he referred to such existing international machinery as the United Nations Security Council, other United Nations bodies, and the Allied Control Council in Berlin.

I may say in a general way that there have been no recent developments about the representation of the Government of the U.S.S.R. in Ottawa or of the Canadian Government in Moscow. I think I should add in fairness to our Chargé d'Affaires and his staff in Moscow that we are receiving from them interesting and full reports on everything that can be ascertained by diplomatic envoys in the capital of the Soviet Union.

WAR PENSIONS BILL PASSED: The House of Commons on May 12 gave third reading to the War Pensions Act amendments. The Minister of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Gregg, stated that cheques covering the retroactive pensions increase of 25 per cent will go out to the 400,000 recipients early in June.

BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE: In reply to inquiry, the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Claxton, made the following statement in the House of Commons May 11.

"Work has been commenced on the Book of Remembrance. It is expected that it will take four or five years to complete. It is desirable for the sake of uniformity of style, to have as much of the work as possible done by one person. Commander Beddoe, who compiled much of the first Book of Remembrance, has undertaken the work of compiling the second. Others will be engaged under his direction."

ATOMIC ENERGY STATEMENT: The following is the text of the statement made by General A.G.L. McNaughton in the Atomic Energy Commission on Friday, May 7:-

"The statement read by the delegate of France and sponsored by the delegations of the United Kingdom and the United States, has in the opinion of the Canadian delegation, stated clearly and accurately the situation that exists in the Atomic Energy Commission today. It serves no useful purpose to deny that an impasse does, in fact, exist.

"In the first and second reports the Commission has a remarkable achievement to its credit; the plan developed in these reports would offer to the world an effective, reliable and impartial control of atomic energy. We believe that this plan is practicable and we know that our views in this regard are shared by all the nations which have served on the Atomic Energy Commission, excepting only the USSR, the Ukraine and Poland.

ELABORATION USELESS

"By failing to accept the first and second reports and, even more so, by refusing to admit the significance of the novel technical facts inherent in the very nature of atomic energy and the far reaching problems of international organizations which follow, the USSR has rejected this technical approach as a starting point for the work of the Commission, and therefore those who follow their line of thought have made useless any further elaboration of the plan accepted by the majority. The fact that the Commission is thus prevented at this time from directly fulfilling the promise of security presented to the world in the first and second reports is indeed most unfortunate and disappointing.

"The Commission has not been able to accept the counter proposals of the USSR, the discussions in the working committee have clearly shown that the measures of inspection and control outlined in these proposals could not be made to give the security and safeguards which nations need and have a right to expect. The opportunities for evasion and for clandestine activities are so many and so wide that no nation could safely confide its security to a system developed on any such weak foundation. The Commission could not honestly have based its work on these proposals.

"Thus no practical alternative has been presented to the conclusions which the Commission has placed before it today. It therefore serves, I think, no useful purpose to continue discussions in the Commission at this time. The Canadian delegation agrees that the suspension of the work of the Commission should be only temporary and that when there is hope for agreement the discussions should be resumed promptly. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Canadian delegation, I endorse the statement

made by the representative of France and support the recommendations made in his statement."

"REMARKABLE PROGRESS": Addressing the United Nations Association of Ottawa on May 10, General McNaughton declared that "very remarkable progress has been achieved" in the direction of international control of atomic energy. He proceeded, in part:-

"You will no doubt have noted the statements made at the meeting of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission on Friday last and I am sure that you will all share the disappointment which the majority of the members of the Commission now experience in having to report that the affairs of the Commission have reached an "impasse" which they consider to be beyond the capacity of the Commission itself to resolve. The majority members of the Commission feel that the issues which have been raised now require debate in a wider forum and to this end they have recommended that the situation should be frankly and fully reported first to the Security Council and then to the General Assembly of the United Nations at its forthcoming regular session which is the session called for September next in Paris.

"I would like to make it quite clear that this proposal on the part of the majority of the Commission does not represent any acceptance of defeat or confession of failure in their efforts to achieve a proper system for the international control of atomic energy. Quite the contrary -- the majority of the members of the Commission are certain that they have evolved and set forth in their reports the technical framework of a system of control which will be satisfactory and which in the end will be accepted and implemented by all nations. They have realized that having completed part of their task which primarily concerns scientific and technological matters the time has arrived when increased efforts should be given to political considerations and therefore they feel that the debate can be pressed with greater advantage in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

BOLD CHALLENGE

"I would like you to think of this action by the majority members for what it is -- a bold challenge to the forces of reaction -- of ignorance -- and of timidity to face up to the new conceptions of international organization which are an unescapable consequence of our entry into the atomic age.

"This challenge will develop in the General Assembly from the firm basis of the knowledge which has been gathered in the Commission, from the arguments which have been marshalled there and will proceed from the firm conviction which has come to fourteen nations out of the seventeen which have taken part in the work of the Commission to date...."