

despatch with respect to the situation in the Near East was received. I believe it was within five minutes of midnight on Friday, September 15, that the despatch was sent from Great Britain to Canada, and also, I understand, to other of the British dominions. That despatch was received in Ottawa, I understand, quite late that same evening. It was in cipher, and had to be decoded after its receipt here. Communications which come to the Canadian government from the government of Great Britain reach the Prime Minister's office through the Governor General's office. The despatch in question was received in my office some time between two and three o'clock on Saturday afternoon. With respect to that there is no difference of opinion between the clerks in His Excellency's office and those in my own; it was between two and three o'clock on Saturday afternoon that the despatch was received. In the meantime, the press of this country had received a cable communication from the Old Country to the effect that the several dominions had been invited to send contingents to the Near East. Indeed, the press of Saturday between twelve and two announced that the government of New Zealand had already sent an answer promising to send a contingent. On the Saturday in question I was in my constituency of North York. Some comment has been made with regard to the circumstance that I was not in Ottawa, and it has been suggested that had I been in the city, the despatch on the Near East crisis would have been received before the press announcement that Canada had been invited to send a contingent to the Near East; also that the answer of our government would have been sent with greater promptness. The circumstance that I was not here on that particular day made no difference whatever as to the time of receipt of the despatch being after that at which the announcement was made in the press that the dominions had been invited to send contingents. Had I been here the result would have been exactly the same. However, I may say—perhaps it is not necessary, but I should like to say it—that that particular day was one of about a dozen days in the entire year during which I was absent any distance from my post in this city. I think that through the whole of last year, I did not allow myself a single day's vacation; so far as I recall, there was but an exception of one day. On this particular occasion I was spending two days in my own constituency, the only two days I had been privileged to spend there during the year. When I reached Ottawa the following morning, immediately

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

upon reading the despatch I sent a communication to the British government asking for an explanation as to how it came about that before any communication had reached the government at Ottawa, the press of the country should have had a statement to the effect that the British government had invited Canada to send a contingent to the Near East. At the same time I forwarded to my colleagues who were at Geneva a copy of the communication which had been received, in order that they might be fully informed, and in order that we who were at Ottawa might have the benefit of their opinion and counsel from Geneva where, with other delegates, they were attending the sessions of the League of Nations.

Perhaps I had better give to the House immediately, as nearly as I can, the substance of the despatch which was received, and then I will give the House the substance of the communication which I sent after seeing its context. The despatch was to the effect that the British cabinet had decided to resist Turkish aggression upon Europe, and to make exertions to prevent the Allies being driven out of Constantinople by Mustapha Kemal, and in particular and above all, to maintain the freedom of the Straits by securing firmly the Gallipoli peninsula. The French government, it was stated, had notified the British government that they were in agreement with the British government in informing Mustapha Kemal that he must not violate the neutral zone by which the Straits and Constantinople were protected, and had so instructed their High Commissioner at Constantinople. It was also stated that the Italians were in general accord. It was mentioned that the government of Great Britain was addressing itself to Roumania, Serbia and Greece with a view to securing their military participation in defence of the deep-water line between Europe and Asia.

It was further stated that the British government were notifying all the powers aforesaid of their intention to make exertions, and that they were placing a British division under orders to reinforce Sir Charles Harrington, the allied commander-in-chief at Constantinople; that the British navy would co-operate, that these arrangements were intended to cover the period which must elapse before a stable peace with Turkey could be secured; that for this purpose a conference was being proposed probably at Venice, possibly at Paris, and that it was essential that the Allies should be strong enough to maintain their position at Con-