

In conclusion let me say that if ever there was a time in the history of this world when people needed the guidance of Almighty God, it is now. I hope that whatever we do as Canada, whatever statements we make, we may ever keep in mind that the solution of world affairs and world problems can come only under divine guidance.

Hon. BROOKE CLAXTON (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I believe no important statement ever made in this house has been received with a greater degree of unanimity by the house and throughout the country than the statement made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. St. Laurent) on January 30 of this year regarding Canada's participation in the making of peace with Germany and Austria. The reception it received from the leaders of all parties in the house and the reception it received throughout the country showed that on this matter, as today on most matters of external policy, the Canadian people were united to a greater degree than perhaps even they themselves generally recognized. That has been demonstrated in the debate today. In moving this motion the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon) said, "I stand with the government." The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan (Mr. Coldwell) said that the government's stand had his full support and that he was in complete agreement with its general lines; while the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low), who has just resumed his seat, commended the government for the stand taken. This is a demonstration of Canadian unity on a great and important issue never before seen in this house, and I believe never before seen in the country in peace time. It comes out of the unity we had in time of war. The right we claim to be heard in time of peace stems from our contribution, the contribution of the whole nation, made in unity during the war.

Today I will deal with four matters, because they have been touched upon by some hon. members and because they have a bearing upon our discussion. First, there is the question of the Paris conference, the function of that conference, the role we played there and the lessons to be learned; second, whether the fact that our troops were not occupying Germany has any bearing on the present situation; third, the extent of our participation in war gives foundation for our right to work for peace; and fourth, the special position, the capacity of Canada to make a great contribution to peace at this time.

With what the hon. member for Peel said about the Paris conference I have not very much to find disfavour. Everyone knows that the role of that conference was limited. It

[Mr. Low.]

grew out of the Potsdam conference held in July and August, 1945, when the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union, the three nations which had carried the supreme burden in war decided they would form a council of the foreign ministers of the three powers and France to set about drafting the terms of peace with the satellites of Germany. The Paris conference stemmed from that meeting, and the meetings of the council of foreign ministers, which took place at London, Moscow and Paris. Meanwhile, in accordance with their instructions, their deputies were drafting the terms of peace with the five satellites of Germany: Italy, Bulgaria, Roumania, Finland and Hungary.

The conference was called on July 5 to meet at Paris on July 29. Its function was not to draft treaties of peace but to make representations to the council of foreign ministers as to what the drafts they prepared should contain. By the terms of invitation the council of foreign ministers was to have the final say as to what the treaties contained; and by the terms of the draft treaties themselves, the treaties with the five satellite powers were to come into effect upon their ratification by the four great powers.

When we in Canada received that invitation we could either go to the Paris conference on those terms or not go at all. The government of Canada, I believe rightly, like the other seventeen governments which received identical invitations, decided to be represented at the Paris conference by a delegation; and we considered it so important that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) himself headed that delegation. We did not have a large delegation. Some nations were represented by as many as three hundred. The Canadian delegation, we found, had all too few members to do good work without overtiring them. However the Canadian delegation made an effective contribution within the scope of our interest in the matters under discussion. Speaking at a plenary session at the outset of the conference, the Prime Minister made the suggestion that during the conference itself the council of foreign ministers should meet to discuss questions arising during the conference. That was one of the few constructive proposals with regard to procedure that were made during the early plenary sessions. It was well received and acted upon in part, and I believe it contributed substantially to the work of the conference.

However there is no doubt that on account of the narrowness of the terms of reference, the vagueness of the rules of procedure laid before the conference, and the acrimonious