

In the circumstances the government have thought it advisable to request the French minister to take the necessary steps to suspend the operation of French consulates and consular agencies, and I have today advised the French minister accordingly.

Mr. STIRLING: Would the Prime Minister indicate whether these are French nationals who will have to be returned to France, and whether there are Canadian nationals there who will also have to be returned to Canada?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I would have to make inquiries in order to give my hon. friend an exact answer.

(c) French Consulates and Consular Agents in Canada.  
Statement by Prime Minister, May 21, 1942

On the orders of the day:

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (Parkdale): In view of the statement made yesterday by the Prime Minister that he had advised the French minister to take the necessary steps to suspend the operation of French consulates and consular agencies in Canada, I should like to ask the Prime Minister if he does not think that the reasons which he gave apply with equal force to the continuation of the French legation. Secondly, does the French minister continue to enjoy the usual diplomatic immunity in so far as telegraph, telephone, correspondence or other communications with Vichy are concerned?

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): In reply to my hon. friend I would say that I do not think that the reasons which I gave with respect to the closing of French consulates and consular agencies would apply in equal measure to the French legation. The day before I gave reasons why it was thought advisable to maintain the diplomatic relations that exist at the present time between France and Canada. So far as the privileges and immunities which the French minister enjoys are concerned, they are the same as those enjoyed by all who hold the position of minister to Canada from another country.

The acting leader of the opposition, the hon. member for Yale (Mr. Stirling), asked me yesterday whether as a result of the forthcoming suspension of French consulates and consular agencies there would be any consuls and employees of the consulates who were French nationals and who would be obliged to return to France. He asked also if Canada had consuls in unoccupied France whose offices would be closed and who would be obliged to return to Canada. I was unable to give my hon. friend the exact information at the time, but I can now give him the following reply to his question.

The various consuls and vice consuls, and some of their employees are French nationals who came to Canada solely in their official capacity. When a consulate is closed, the official status in Canada of the consular officers and employees is automatically ended and such officers and employees would naturally leave Canada. Consular officials who lived in Canada before their appointment are not in the same category as full-time career officials. Some are British subjects and some are French nationals, but their status as residents of Canada is not affected by the closing of their offices. There are no Canadian government consuls or officials in unoccupied France and therefore no question of any exchange arises.