

Commonwealth Conference

But the principles upon which our policy is based and our approach to this problem have already been made known to the house by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) and I want to emphasize that again, in spite of some reports to the contrary, those were not altered during the meeting in London.

The first objective, on which we are all agreed, is that everything possible should be done to prevent fighting and stop it if it occurs, and then to seek a political settlement by negotiation. But no one thinks this is going to be easy. It will require time and patience and the chances for success are not likely to be improved by hasty or ill-considered declarations, or by conferences for which there has been no proper diplomatic preparation.

No one in the free world wants war, with all its unimaginable horrors, to develop over this Formosan situation. I am confident that those who are directing policy in Washington and London and other commonwealth capitals are just as anxious that such a war should be avoided as we are. I think we can all take encouragement from the fact that the President of the United States has recognized that the situation is one which requires great care, great patience, and understanding, and that these are the qualities which are governing his policy in this matter.

I should also like once more to emphasize this: Canada has no commitments regarding collective security in the Far East, and indeed no commitments of any kind in respect of the Formosa area except those which arise out of our membership in the United Nations. I do not think that there is anything else I could properly say about our discussions at the prime ministers' meeting beyond what is set out in the communique. These communiqués do represent in substance what all the prime ministers were agreed it was desirable to publish about these meetings.

We expect to move at an early date to refer the estimates of the Department of External Affairs to the committee on external affairs and there will then be an opportunity to discuss any matters arising out of reports on this recent conference as well as any other aspect of our international relations.

Hon. W. Earl Rowe (Acting Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, while it has been agreed that any debate on the statement given by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) to the house take place at a later date, I do wish just to comment that we did expect a much fuller statement on the conference than we have received today. It is rather a surprise to me that the Prime Mini-

ster has made his report on such an important conference so brief. It is very difficult for us in the opposition to realize just why so many of the things that we thought might have been brought out in the open were not mentioned in the statement.

The tragic possibilities that are implied in hydrogen development make us all more or less stand aghast as to how far mankind has gone in planning its own destruction. As the right hon. Prime Minister has well said in the words of the Right Hon. Sir Winston Churchill, it may be—we all pray that it will be so—that the powerful destructive forces may destroy war rather than mankind itself.

As the Prime Minister stated, the Formosa situation developed at the same time as the conference and it is difficult to see how any such conference could deal very effectively with a situation like that with the seventh fleet of the United States moving alone to stand between Formosa and the mainland of China.

I rather regret that something more was not said and more details given as to how far the conference got on economic problems. I do feel that despite these international tensions we should not be overlooking entirely the problems of our own people in our own daily lives. These rather terrifying tensions are likely to be with us for some time but I do think that our common economic progress is vital to the strength and livelihood of our whole scheme of defence and influence in the world.

I am not going to enlarge on this but I just want to say that speaking for myself, and I think for the party which I lead temporarily, I am disappointed that the Prime Minister's statement was so very brief.

Mr. Coldwell: When does the Prime Minister expect that we shall be able to discuss international matters? When is it the intention to refer the estimates of the Department of External Affairs to the committee?

Mr. St. Laurent: I have been discussing this with the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) and I understand that he has important engagements that will take him out of town for Wednesday and Thursday.

Mr. Coldwell: Early next week.

Mr. St. Laurent: I would hope that if it cannot be on Friday it would be early next week.

[*Later:*]

Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, in view of the statement which the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) has made,