

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 10, 1961

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

TRADE

O.E.C.D.—REPORT ON FOURTH MEETING OF
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE GROUP

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a brief report to the house on the fourth meeting of the development assistance group which took place in London from the 27th to the 29th of March. As hon. members will recall, this group is a temporary body; when the organization for economic co-operation and development comes into being later this year the present group will be transformed into the development assistance committee of that organization.

At these meetings Canada, like the other countries concerned, was represented by officials from the various departments concerned with our international aid program. The other members of the group are Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States and the commission of the European economic community. Mr. Kristensen, the secretary general designate of the O.E.C.D., as well as representatives of the international bank and the inter-American development bank, also participated in the London meeting.

This meeting of the development assistance group was one of special significance. It was the first since the new administration took office in the United States. The administration, as hon. members are no doubt aware, has shown a very strong interest in improving the quantity and quality of the aid flowing to underdeveloped countries from the more advanced countries of the free world. In line with this interest, the administration put forward proposals for enlarging and intensifying the activities of the group.

The conclusions of the meeting in London were set forth in a communiqué to which are attached two important resolutions. With the consent of the house I should like to table these documents at this time. By way of summary I might say that the group agreed to recommend, as a common objective, an expansion in the aggregate volume, and an improved effectiveness, of the resources made available to the less developed countries. Accordingly it was agreed that the members

of the group would periodically review together the amount and nature of their contributions in terms of multilateral and bilateral aid, and also agreed that a study should be made of the principles by which governments might equitably determine their respective contributions to the common objective, having regard to the different circumstances and capacities of each country.

The group also decided to strengthen the effectiveness of its work by inviting the delegations of the United States and France to nominate a chairman and vice chairman respectively of the group to serve until the O.E.C.D. is formed, and to be available in these capacities thereafter. Under this arrangement the chairman will be expected to devote most of his time to the work of the D.A.G. He will co-operate with the secretary general of the O.E.E.C. and should be able to provide the kind of leadership and continuity of purpose which the important objectives of the group require but which could not be easily achieved under the former arrangement whereby a different chairman was chosen for each meeting, with his responsibilities being confined to the actual conduct of the meeting in question.

I need hardly say that the government of Canada, representing a country which has itself played a significant role for more than a decade in the provision of bilateral and multilateral aid to the underdeveloped countries, is in sympathy with the purport of these resolutions. We recognize that an increasing number of the more economically advanced countries are now in a position to initiate or expand their aid in various directions and by various methods, and that by consulting together in the D.A.G. we can all improve the effectiveness of our assistance programs.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think hon. members will have had the opportunity, to some extent at least, to follow in the press the activities of this important meeting in London and the communiqué that was issued at the end of that meeting. On this side we will be happy to support anything that can be done to co-ordinate and extend development assistance, especially on multilateral lines. If the London meeting, as I understand from the minister's statement is the case, has made some contribution to that objective, then I think it should be strongly supported.