

I could not very well leave Canada until the end of the debate on the address. It was the first session of the new parliament; there had been no division; I had to make perfectly sure that the government was going to remain in office, so that I felt it advisable to wait until after the first division. However, before leaving I did call into my office the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bracken), the leader of the C.C.F. party (Mr. Coldwell) and the leader of the Social Credit party (Mr. Low) and told them individually one of the reasons why I was leaving at that time. The house will remember that Mr. Attlee had communicated with me somewhat earlier, asking me to come over for purposes of consultation. I had been obliged to reply that I could not leave at least until the session was under way; but this matter coming up in the first month of the session made it important that I should not delay my departure longer.

There was one other reason why I went at that particular time. Part of the information secured by the police was to the effect that a scientist who was quite high in his profession and very much trusted by the British government; who was a citizen of Britain but was engaged in research work in Canada; who had perhaps as much knowledge as anyone of matters pertaining to the release of atomic energy and researches in that connection, was about to leave Canada; that he had taken passage on a plane and would be arriving at a certain time in London, where he would make contact with the agent of a foreign power. Information of this kind cannot be easily trusted to telegraphic communication. I thought I should give to the British government as full information as I could with regard to what we had ascertained.

I left for Washington about the end of September. I called upon the President at the White House and had a short talk with him before leaving for New York to catch the ship on which I was crossing to Britain. I arrived in London on a Sunday evening and immediately, on Mr. Attlee's invitation, spent the evening with him at Chequers, where I told him of what had been discovered here. Later I had talks with Mr. Bevin, the foreign secretary, to whom I gave such information as I thought the British government might wish to have. As hon. members know, I returned later to Washington, in company with Mr. Attlee, where a conference took place with the President in respect of atomic energy, in connection with which a report has already been made. I then came back to Ottawa accompanied by Mr. Attlee and, after Mr. Attlee

returned to England, took up anew the question into which I had been looking so anxiously before I went away.

One question that undoubtedly presents itself to the minds of hon. members is why there should have been such a long delay in disclosing this condition of affairs. Why was the commission not appointed at an earlier date? Well, I think I have indicated enough to show that it would have been a very great and grave mistake to have taken any premature step in regard to the time at which the investigation should take place. The last thing this country would have wished to be responsible for was that in any way it had affected the relations between any of the united nations in a way that might prove prejudicial to all. Hon. members will recall that there was a meeting in London of the council of foreign ministers at which the British, American and U.S.S.R. foreign ministers were present. That particular meeting did not get very far. After it was over, there were recriminations of one kind and another. I think it would have been most unfortunate had these disclosures taken place while that meeting was being held. There were other meetings which would be held in the near future to consider. It was a question not only of what was the wisest step to take, but also of the best time at which to take it.

In order to be perfectly sure of an objective view being taken of the whole situation, the government decided to secure special counsel and have him go over with the police the whole record they had, and the documents which were in their possession, and advise the government as to the course which in his opinion it would be best to follow. The first question was what counsel to select. Hon. members are now aware that the government chose Mr. E. K. Williams of Winnipeg to be counsel to advise the government in this matter. Mr. Williams was made the choice of the government because of his eminent reputation in his profession and because at the time he was president of the Canadian Bar Association. We were anxious that whoever was chosen to advise the government and later on, as it proved, the commission, would be one in whom members of the legal profession and the country would have every confidence. We felt that Mr. Williams, being president of the Canadian Bar Association, and occupying such a prominent position in the legal profession, would be the best person upon whom to call.

A report was made by Mr. Williams, which I hope some time later may be given to the public. It cannot be given now because it