

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 6, 1957

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

GHANA—WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to remind hon. members that on this day the commonwealth of nations is welcoming a new member, Ghana, formerly known to us as the Gold Coast. The Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys (Mr. Prudham), who is representing the government and people of Canada at the independence celebrations, had the rare privilege yesterday of witnessing the final step in the evolution of a British African colony, the Gold Coast, into the fully self-governing African nation of Ghana.

It was with a deep sense of regret that I was obliged, because of my duties here at home, to decline the warm personal invitation from Dr. Nkrumah to attend these important ceremonies taking place today in Accra. I should have very much welcomed the opportunity to have a personal talk with my most recent commonwealth colleague and hope that I shall be given such opportunity in the not too distant future.

The government of Canada, and I am sure all hon. members of this house would wish to associate themselves with me in this regard, is most happy to welcome our newest commonwealth associate. We wish to assure the government and the people of Ghana of our friendship and support in the first testing years of independence. As the first member of the commonwealth to emerge from colonial status barely 90 years ago, we feel we should warn the Ghanaians that their government may perhaps receive a lot of advice, some of it unsolicited, about the conduct of its affairs, from other commonwealth nations which have gone through the same process. This gesture will not of course be meant in any meddling sense of wishing to interfere; it is merely another indication that we are all still quite close to our own achievement of independence. The Ghanaians will also find a fund of warm good will and a desire to help which is, I am sure, quite unprecedented among any other group of nations on the face of the earth.

Canada will have a particular interest in developing a close political relationship with

Ghana as an African member of the commonwealth, and in fostering trade with it as well. For these purposes we intend to open a diplomatic mission in Accra and appoint a Canadian high commissioner as soon as it may be possible for us to do so.

We are indeed pleased to see the people of Ghana emerging from colonial status in Africa into a world community of nations and we very much hope that in the near future it will be possible for us to welcome Ghana as a new member at the United Nations.

I feel that at this time we should also pay a warm tribute to the United Kingdom which has led the people of Ghana to self-government and national freedom by its enlightened and constructive policies of colonial administration, policies which are in such startling contrast to those of the communist empires with their reactionary and oppressive satellite colonialism. As Ghana becomes the newest and very welcome member of the family, we can all rejoice in this new demonstration of the ultimate goal of those enlightened and constructive policies of the United Kingdom as the centre and heart of our commonwealth.

(Translation):

And, as both languages are official in this house, I wish to add a few words to assure the government and the people of Ghana that Canadian citizens of French descent and language wholeheartedly join their fellow citizens of other origins, whose mother tongue is the one I just spoke, in welcoming them most cordially into this group of free nations which constitutes an association unique in this world, one which contributes to the welfare not only of its members, but also, I think, to that of all free peoples on earth.

(Text):

Mr. Howard C. Green (Vancouver-Quadra): Mr. Speaker, this is one of those happy occasions when we are in complete agreement in this house. Those occasions perhaps are more frequent than the Canadian people realize. A very outstanding event, with which we are dealing today, is the granting of self-government to Ghana, and on behalf of the members of the official opposition I should like to extend to that sister nation our best wishes and a warm welcome to the commonwealth.