

ference is to be other than an autocrat or dictator and to settle everything by his own word and decision, he would wish to communicate with his colleagues in Canada and get their views and the collective view, before he gave an official decision in the name of his own country. I have been at several conferences in Britain, and I know something about how matters are decided at the council table. I was present in the war cabinet in England, as hon. members know, a little over a year ago, and I must say that what I saw and felt as a member of a war council sitting in London only helped to emphasize what I am saying to the house at the present time, namely, the importance to a minister who wishes to be effective in decisions that he is required to make, of being able to say that he speaks, not in his own name alone, but in the name of his colleagues; and further, the importance of his having with him at the time he is making his decisions the expert officers of the departments which are immediately concerned. In attending a war cabinet meeting in London the ministers have, either sitting by their sides or in adjoining rooms, experts who come and give them the information on which they base their decisions; and these experts give the information as a result of long and carefully prepared consultation in advance. I go to London and take my place at a war cabinet, and unless I take the staff of military headquarters from the Department of National Defence, the staff of the Department of External Affairs, and officials from some other departments of the government, I am not in a position to say what the government of Canada is prepared to support in the House of Commons of Canada. But the way in which matters work out to-day is this, that if a question of importance comes up on which the views of Canada and the different parts of the commonwealth are desired, I may receive a cable at my office at eleven o'clock in the morning; I can have my colleagues together at half-past eleven; and in a great many cases I am able to send a reply at half-past twelve; if I am not, there is the best of reasons why that reply should be held over until there is an opportunity of getting expert advice from different sources here. But with respect to any decision that Canada makes it is important that we should have the decision made in the atmosphere of this new world in which we live and where we can take account not only of the feeling of Canada but also of possible relationships of questions arising that will be of concern as well to the United States. Time and time again, during this war, opinions have been sent from Canada on possible repercussions

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

which would result in the United States or in some other part of the British commonwealth. I am sure that the British government would be the first to acknowledge that those opinions have been of the utmost service to the British government and to the common cause.

I say, therefore, that what we have to-day is a continuing conference between cabinets of the British commonwealth. Surely nothing could be better than that. Instead of a single war council at London to-day there is a collective cabinet, a cabinet composed of the cabinets of the nations of the British commonwealth. True, its members are not all sitting in one room, but you have a cabinet in Ottawa, one in Australia, one in New Zealand, one in South Africa, and one in London, all pooling their information there and in the different centres which I have mentioned; and out of that means of consultation and communication are evolved the different policies which are given expression to in one form or another. That is my answer to my hon. friend when he says that we have not the outward and visible sign of unity which we should have.

This is a world war, and methods that have proved adequate in the past are inadequate to-day. I am happy to be able to say that, with one or two exceptions, I cannot see that we have suffered in the least by reason of not having further representation than we have at the present time in London.

May I add that we have in London a member of the Privy Council of Canada in the person of the Right Hon. Vincent Massey, the High Commissioner, one who has had a great deal of experience in public affairs and who enjoys the full confidence of the British government. Hon. members may not be aware that after important meetings of the war cabinet one of its members calls together the representatives of the governments of the different parts of the British commonwealth and advises them of what has been discussed in the war cabinet, and with respect to any matter that relates particularly to any one part of the commonwealth the fullest information is given on that particular subject.

Mr. Massey keeps in constant communication with myself and the Department of External Affairs and gives us this added information. In addition to that, we have in Ottawa a former member of the British government, the Right Hon. Malcolm MacDonald, than whom there could be no abler diplomat or one who has a better understanding of government, and he is receiving day by day from his government information which he imparts to our government. Further, I receive in regard