

The Address—Mr. St. Laurent

matters which may be the exclusive concern of the provinces or the joint concern of both the federal and the provincial authorities. He said that he hoped that that might be arrived at by consultation with the provinces.

I would be most happy, indeed, if I could expect such a result could be achieved in any short period of time, but I am afraid that it will be a considerable undertaking. Not because there would, on either side, be any effort to obtain an advantage one over the other but because of the realization which we all must have that anything which is done in that respect is done for a long period ahead and to serve a constantly enlarging Canadian nation. Having that responsibility, no one can easily contemplate giving any consent or acquiescence which might under any possible circumstances take from one or the other of those authorities something which it would otherwise have enjoyed.

But there are other ways in which this tenuous or shadowy divisional line may be pointed out or marked, and these ways have been followed since the earliest days of confederation. I refer to the judicial process. I think it will be a prudent course to have the language used indicate that there will be ample opportunity for anyone who may feel that anything which is being attempted does not come within that language to challenge its correctness before the courts of justice and have them determine whether what is proposed is something which is exclusively of federal concern, exclusively of provincial concern, or of joint concern to both the provincial and the federal authorities. I hope we shall be able to dispel any feeling that there is an attempt to settle by legislation something which could more properly be determined by judicial process.

The hon. gentleman dealt with the situation in which the world finds itself, and to which reference is made in the speech from the throne in the declaration that the ultimate aim of the Canadian government is to move toward that situation where trading nations can engage freely in mutual trade under a multilateral system. There is no doubt that currency is a medium of international trade, and I think it is obvious that there is a serious sterling-dollar problem which has been an impediment to the restoration of that trade in which this nation has perhaps a greater proportionate interest than any of the nations with whom we have been discussing these problems.

I tried to realize for my own benefit, and to point out to some of those to whom I was speaking the other day, the extent to which we are interested in international trade. I got figures from our statistical department

showing that our exports were of the general order of \$3,000 million. I told those to whom I was speaking that I had never seen a billion dollars nor even a million dollars. In order to get some conception of what such a figure means I have tried to reduce it to a simpler form. A simple calculation has shown me that for every family of five in this Canadian nation we are required to sell something over \$1,200 worth of our surplus in order to continue to live as we have been living in the past. I would be surprised if there were any of those with whom we have been discussing these problems who find it necessary to export such a large proportion of their surplus as is required to be done by this country in order to maintain the level of welfare for its people.

As the leader of the opposition stated, during the last week most important international meetings have been held and well-intentioned efforts made to remove the impediment to world trade resulting from this sterling-dollar problem. I think the hon. gentleman was quite right in pointing out that such solutions as have to be envisaged must be predicated on the statement that was made in the communiqué issued by the ministers of finance at Washington, that by the middle of 1952 no more extraordinary help will be coming from the North American countries. That being so, it is quite apparent that we have all got to work toward a situation where the earning of dollars by sterling countries, or those tied closely to sterling as their main currency, must become sufficient to enable them to secure from us the things that they need and want from us, the things it is very important for us to be able to sell to them, the things for which we have no immediate use in our own economy.

I should not like in any way to say anything which would anticipate what my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott), will be communicating to this house this evening, but I can give hon. members the assurance that all those factors are very much in our minds in the consideration we are giving to what action, if any, is required at the present time from Canada in view of the announcement made by the United Kingdom and followed by so many others yesterday and today.

I believe that, with the leader of the opposition, we are all satisfied that this Washington conference proved conclusively that, when men of good will meet and frankly expose what they believe to be the causes of the difficulties which are to be overcome, their very frankness is evidence of the degree to which they can have confidence in each other and to which they will contribute to the best possible solution of those difficulties. We were all, of course, rather scandalized at the tone