

The Address—Mr. Mackenzie King

accuracy of his statement the following passage from the speech from the throne of November 5:

The measures which you have taken have had in view the immediate task of sharing more completely in the defence of Britain and securing our own country more effectively against internal subversion and external attack.

He did not read the next sentence, but I shall read it:

They have also had in view the long range task of insuring the ultimate defeat of the enemy.

I fail to see wherein the statement as there presented differs in any particular from the announcement of policy of the government with respect to Canada's participation in the war as it was made at the very outset and has been ever since. Hon. members may recall that on September 3, 1939, His Majesty the King addressed all parts of the British empire over the radio in the afternoon, that being the day on which Great Britain went into the war; and his majesty made an appeal to all the dominions to make their own the cause of freedom which Britain had taken up. That same day I broadcast on behalf of the government to the people of Canada; indeed, it was a broadcast which went, I believe, to all parts of the British commonwealth; I then announced what I had already stated the policy of the government would be in the event of war—the policy which we would present to this parliament at the time it would be called upon to decide as to Canada's participation. I have here the broadcast which I made on that occasion, and I find in it the following passage:

This morning the king, speaking to his peoples at home and across the seas, appealed to all to make their own the cause of freedom which Britain had again taken up. Canada has already answered that call. On Friday last the government, speaking on behalf of the Canadian people, announced that in the event of the United Kingdom becoming engaged in war in an effort to resist aggression, they would as soon as parliament meets seek its authority for effective cooperation by Canada at the side of Britain.

That was the statement of policy of this government, made before Britain herself had gone into the war, made known to the people of Canada as the policy this government would follow if Britain went to war to resist aggression—that we would immediately summon parliament and we would ask parliament to stand at the side of Britain in that great struggle.

Now, what is it in this speech which my hon. friend says denotes a change of policy:

The measures which you have taken have had in view the immediate task of sharing more
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completely in the defence of Britain and securing our own country more effectively against internal subversion and external attack.

All through the days and months which have passed since war was declared the government has held to that one position, that we were fighting at the side of Britain against aggression; and in doing so we have noted particularly two obligations; one, the primary obligation of defence of our own country; second, co-operation with our forces at the side of Britain in Britain herself.

But my hon. friend, if I gather rightly, says, "You are reversing the order. Your primary duty should not be that of defending your own country, you should be over in Britain at the side of Britain, your primary responsibility is there." Well, may I say to my hon. friend that in the course of the years that I have had responsibility I have attended several imperial conferences in the old land. The first conference I attended was as long ago as 1923; the next conference I attended was in 1926; I attended another imperial conference in 1937; and in each of those conferences a main subject of discussion was the question of defence, of how most effectively the different parts of the British commonwealth of nations could co-operate in the event of the different parts deciding to join together in the face of a common foe. In the discussions which took place on each of those occasions a definite policy was laid down. It was the same on each occasion; the primary duty of each part was its own defence.

I have in my hand the proceedings of the conference of 1926, and I find under the heading "Defence", page 28:

The conference gave much consideration to the question of defence and to the methods by which the defence arrangements of each part of the empire could be most effectively coordinated.

The conclusions reached by the imperial conference on the subject of defence may be summarized as follows:

The first conclusion refers to the resolutions on defence "adopted at the last session of the conference". These are reaffirmed. What were the resolutions adopted "at the last session"? They were those of the conference of 1923.

The conference of 1926 reaffirmed the policy laid down at the previous conference. In the policy then laid down there appear the following words:

The conference suggests the following as guiding principles:

(a) Primary responsibility of each portion of the empire represented at the conference for its own local defences.