

to strengthen the ties that bind so many millions of people together in the world's most unique organization.

The calm of the Mont Tremblant meeting was temporarily upset by a press conference that for vigor and exuberance has perhaps not been surpassed in Canada's history. Attention was diverted to a topic which had found its way into one of the newspapers, namely a proposal for free trade between the United Kingdom and Canada. It made a good news story but had no place in the Commonwealth meeting which was concerned with other matters.

The next conference took place in Ottawa after the Commonwealth Finance Ministers had departed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Thorneycroft, and the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Eccles, stayed over for two days to confer with various members of our Government with regard to immediate practical steps to increase the trade between the United Kingdom and Canada. This was a natural follow-up to our Prime Minister's earlier suggestion that some of Canada's trade with the United States might be diverted to the United Kingdom. The free trade idea was officially advanced but we were not asked to make a decision one way or the other for, as the U.K. Ministers themselves said, a proposition such as this would require a great deal of time for consideration. The common market and the proposed free trade area in Europe, they pointed out, were subjects of discussion for eighteen months before the United Kingdom authorities took any stand whatsoever. Consequently we utilized the short time at our disposal to discuss the present trade situation between Canada and the United Kingdom. As an immediate practical step we decided to send to the United Kingdom a large and representative trade mission in November to explore the possibilities of increasing imports to Canada from that country. If the dollar earnings of the United Kingdom can be increased, Canadian exports can be enlarged.

As a result of Canada's publicly announced desire to increase her trade with the United Kingdom and with the Commonwealth it was not surprising that we should receive an invitation to go to Washington to talk over matters of mutual concern. Canada is the best customer of the United States and our neighbour is interested in knowing about Canada's attitude. It has not escaped the notice of Washington that there is growing disquiet in Canada over our imbalance of trade with the United States nor that there has been dissatisfaction over some aspects of their surplus disposal program.

We spent two days in Washington. Nobody "fixed" us. We had friendly but very frank discussions and our position was stated clearly. Binding agreements were not possible but assurances were given that Canada's interests would not be overlooked.

These conferences that I have mentioned have drawn public attention to some of the facts of life in respect of Canada's trade. Public awareness has been indicated in a recent Gallup Poll which records a trend heavily in favour of diverting some of our trade from the United States to the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Over the years much has been said about this but