

to them for our defence? Similarly with regard to England. Are members of this government who are to represent Canada at the imperial conference to be asked to assert Canada's equality of status with all the nations of the British commonwealth and at the same time to tell the British government that we are relying upon Great Britain to protect our coasts, and will do nothing to help ourselves because we have their protection? In a word, so far as looking to either the United States or Great Britain for the defence of our coasts or of any part of the dominion, while naturally we are glad to know that we can count on that additional safeguard in any great emergency, to suggest that we should depend upon it entirely and do absolutely nothing for ourselves is simply to be lacking in self-respect as a nation; it is simply sponging. I submit that sponging by a nation is, in the eyes of other nations, exactly the same as it is in the case of individuals. An individual who is prepared to look to his neighbours to guard his own home and is not prepared to do anything himself for its defence lacks that kind of manliness and self-respect which entitles him to be classed as a citizen of his country. While we may congratulate ourselves that we are fortunate in our proximity to the United States, while we may be glad of the Monroe doctrine, while it is our good fortune to have both the United States and Great Britain as close friends ready to come and help us should we ever be the victims of aggression, let us realize that if we are to look to them for help all the more we must be prepared to lend a hand ourselves, and that certainly in the defence of our own country.

With respect to neutrality, if we are to look to the United States for assistance, that is all the more reason why we must be prepared to see that the United States at least is not embarrassed by reason of any failure on our part to safeguard our own neutrality. I will not go into the question of neutrality this afternoon beyond observing that any nation that does not wish to become a belligerent in a war must at least be able to see that the waters adjacent to its own coasts are so patrolled by its own vessels that no belligerent can come and operate from that base against some other country with which it may be at war. As was ably pointed out the other evening, a ship coming from overseas from some country at war and entering our waters might immediately involve us in conflict. Unless we are in a position to safeguard our own commerce within our harbours and rivers we cannot expect to be able to maintain neutrality even if we have decided so to do.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

I have spoken already of the support of the league and I will not discuss that point further at the moment, though I hope at some other time to have an opportunity to make an additional reference to it. Let me conclude with a word in reference to the imperial conference and imperial defence. I have already, I believe, made clear that so far as participation in any war is concerned the position of the present government, and indeed of all governments in Canada, is that there will be no participation by Canada in a war overseas except by the consent of our own parliament. As long as that is understood, hon. members should have sufficient confidence in themselves to believe that the right course will be followed with respect to any possible participation by Canada in foreign wars.

A good deal has been said in the course of this discussion about the danger of attending imperial conferences and of what may take place at such conferences. May I point out, first of all, that an imperial conference is only a conference; it is not a cabinet. An imperial conference is not a body that exists for the purpose of making policies for the empire and with authority to make such policies and to carry them out. An imperial conference is simply a meeting of representatives of different parts of the empire for the purpose of conferring together on matters of great common concern. Undoubtedly at conferences efforts may be made to introduce imperial policies and gain acceptance for them; but every government is responsible for the attitude that it takes at an imperial conference and I wish to say, here and now, that the attitude which this present administration will take at the forthcoming imperial conference is that which it has taken at every other conference, namely, that it is not in a position to bind Canada to anything. We shall be glad to get and to give as much information as we can on matters of common concern, on matters of trade, of defence, on constitutional problems and the like; but we shall be as free to take our own action with regard to these matters as we are at the present time. Unless its government permits it, there is nothing that an imperial conference can do which can in any way bind this country without the knowledge and consent of its parliament. Therefore I do not think that there need be much fear concerning what will take place by way of commitments at the conference.

Resolutions have been adopted at previous imperial conferences. I should like to read those concerning defence which were adopted