

referred the questioner to the unanimous approval of the Locarno treaty by the Imperial conference.

The questioner declared that the resolution passed by the Imperial conference on the recommendation of the Premiers' committee on Inter-imperial relations had no solid meaning, and he asked if Colonel Amery had made any representations to Sir Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary, to the effect that Great Britain should not be left isolated in this way.

Colonel Amery replied that he thought the resolution of the Imperial conference expressing satisfaction with the foreign policy of His Majesty's government was a solid contribution.

Leaving the matter there, I invite at a later date an expression of opinion from the leader of the government as to what is the extent and nature of that solid contribution which we are to give in respect to the Locarno treaty, which has never yet been submitted to this House for ratification or approval.

Now, furthermore, the report of the Imperial relations committee of this latest Imperial conference, speaking in regard to the negotiation of treaties states:

When a government has received information of the intention of any other government to conduct negotiations it is incumbent upon it to indicate its attitude with reasonable promptitude. So long as the initiating government receives no adverse comments, and so long as its policy involves no active obligations on the part of other governments, it may proceed on the assumption that its policy is generally acceptable. It must, however, before taking any steps which might involve other governments in any active obligations, obtain their definite assent.

And then it proceeds:

Where by the nature of a treaty it is desirable that it should be ratified on behalf of all the governments of the empire the initiating government may assume that the government which has had full opportunity of indicating its attitude, and has made no adverse comments, will concur in the ratification of the treaty.

Applying this declaration to the negotiation of treaties by the government of Great Britain, then when the government of Canada has received notice of the intention of the government of Great Britain to conduct negotiations with Germany or France, or with any other foreign state, though the treaty to be consummated may affect the rights and interests of British citizens wherever domiciled, or British shipping or other property, belonging to Canadian citizens, wherever located, the government of Great Britain, in the absence of adverse comments from the Canadian government, may assume that its policy is acceptable to Canada, and that the government of Canada, having made no adverse comments, is morally and in good faith bound to concur in the ratification of the treaty so negotiated.

[Mr. Cahan.]

Such treaties may involve the rights and privileges of Canadian citizens in any part of the world, outside the British Empire. We as Canadian citizens have rights guaranteed to us by the British constitution in every part of the world to which we go, as citizens of the British Empire, rights which guarantee to us certain respectful treatment under the Union Jack wherever it flies throughout the British Empire, or wherever it flies on the seven seas, or on the coasts of any foreign state. Those rights and privileges which we enjoy as British citizens throughout the world should not be easily sacrificed, and should not be compromised readily without very clear and careful consideration as to the effects involved. We recall the declaration of the Prime Minister at the last session of parliament that hereafter no British treaty is to be binding upon Canada, unless it received the ratification of the Canadian government, and we by express resolution of parliament declared that no consent or approval or ratification should be expressed by the Canadian government, except upon the authority of parliament itself; yet we find in this new document the possibility that some default, on the part of the Prime Minister or the Minister of External Affairs of Canada, in making adverse comments on any treaty, may result in imposing that treaty upon us, we being morally bound to accept it, simply because one department of this government, through inadvertence or otherwise, fails in the performance of its duty. I find it impossible to reconcile that with the resolution passed by this House last session. Then we have this statement:

Every governing member of the empire is master of its destiny.

I can accept that with modification and restriction. As a platitude for the public platform it is well enough. But as a statement of constitutional right it requires many modifications and restrictions in its application. In a restricted sense Canada is mistress of her own political destiny; but the very existence of Canada as a political entity depends upon keeping inviolate the understandings and conventions embodied in our own constitution with respect to the rights and interests of certain racial and religious minorities, with respect to the rights of certain provinces, such as the provinces by the sea, which have a representation in the Senate that is valuable for the preservation of their specific interests, and with respect to other matters. Those understandings and conventions must be maintained in order that we preserve the political entity and political unity of this country.