

the war. I have enjoyed a similar confidence in communications from Mr. Churchill. I am at the present time at liberty to say that when Mr. Churchill was in Russia having his conversations with Mr. Stalin he communicated with me fully with respect to those conferences. If there were any reason in the world to believe that the Canadian government was not receiving the fullest confidence of Mr. Churchill and his colleagues in the British government, or, as we have an equal right to receive it, in a certain measure, from the President of the United States and those who surround him, I would be the first one to take exception to a procedure which did not keep us fully informed. But I am sure hon. members of the house will agree with me that matters of the kind—the subjects which are discussed, or matters incidental thereto—cannot be made known generally. But what I would like hon. members to appreciate is that some of these things place a very heavy burden upon whoever has to carry the responsibility of maintaining secrecy concerning them. I think I may ask from hon. gentlemen opposite that in so far as is possible for them to do so they will realize that I have a very great responsibility in the matter of confidences, confidences which have to be maintained if the war effort is to be carried on successfully; and I trust that they will not embarrass me by asking questions which it is impossible to answer without disclosing information that should not be disclosed.

My hon. friend has spoken about the importance of an imperial war cabinet. I thought that subject had been settled a year ago, if not before that. Since it was a subject of discussion in this house, Mr. Churchill himself has been here, and in this very chamber he has talked with members of all parties. I know that this question of an imperial war cabinet was discussed with him by various members of this house. Mr. Churchill has exactly the same view, I venture to say, as I myself have and as I have expressed in this house with regard to the position of an imperial war cabinet at this time. I may say that I have had the expression of the view of General Smuts of South Africa. It concurs in all particulars with my own. I have had personal conversations with the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. Fraser; his view is the same as my own. I have not had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Curtin, but I happen to know that his views with respect to an imperial war cabinet and its functioning at a time of war are similar to my own. Indeed, I do not know anyone in a responsible position in any part of the British commonwealth to-day who takes other than the view that for the prime ministers to be leaving their own countries to go and sit as

members of some imperial war cabinet in London would be the greatest possible mistake. Each country should, along with all else, attend to its own individual problems at a time like the present, and we can only work and cooperate successfully in different parts of the empire if, first of all, each makes perfectly sure that matters which are of immediate concern to his own country receive the immediate attention of the leader of the government of that country.

But it does not follow that because there is not some outward and visible sign of an imperial war cabinet such as existed in the last war, and perhaps, to a certain extent, was necessary in the last war, there is not the most effective possible conference and consultation and cooperation between all parts of the British empire. The agencies of communication to-day are very different from what they were at the time of the last war. Anyone who reads Sir Robert Borden's memoirs will see the reason why he laid stress on an imperial war cabinet in London. He could not get any information from London; he did not know what was happening with respect to many of the matters which were being decided; he felt it very necessary that Canada should know on what grounds decisions were being made which were affecting her forces, and the only way that seemed possible to achieve that end at that time was either for Sir Robert himself to attend or for him to have one of his colleagues represent him at the council table in London.

The situation is very different to-day. Since Sir Robert Borden's day we have built up about as perfect a system of communication and consultation between different parts of the commonwealth as it is possible to have. Every day the government receives not one, but many dispatches, direct from the government of Britain relating to matters immediately affecting the war. There is not a major decision with respect to which Canada could be even remotely concerned that is not a subject of communication between us. There have been, I must say, one or two occasions where decisions were reached very quickly in Britain and communicated to us immediately afterwards. Where those cases have arisen they have been matters which, in the opinion of the British government, did not permit the delay of so much as an hour or two in the matter of a decision. But may I say with respect to that and I could not give a better illustration of the importance of not resorting to the old method of consultation in the present war, with regard to any matter of real importance which is to be decided in Britain, if a prime minister attending an imperial con-