

*The Address—Mr. Claxton*

running north and south, all the way along the line between the Pacific and the Atlantic seaboard.

And our relations with the United States are to-day more important than ever before. While we are helping Britain and defending ourselves on the front line we are also playing our part by joining with the United States in the defence of our heritage and our way of life on this continent.

The setting up of a permanent joint board on defence was the most momentous, the most heartening step ever taken in the relations between Canada and the United States. Now that the step has been taken we realize that since we have a common interest it is only common sense that we should cooperate in making the best use of our resources of men and materials, and should have a joint plan of defence. Some governments might have sat back and drifted along, letting the opportunity go by of achieving this great stroke for our country's welfare. By their actions the governments of the United States and Canada showed that democracies can act together decisively; they gave a great demonstration of leadership and proved that we have not outgrown the tradition of treating new situations as soluble problems.

The announcement came as a surprise to Canada no less than to the United States or England, but it was received on all sides with acclaim because it was such plain common sense. That is what a policy requiring initiative and daring always appears to be when it has been successfully carried out.

In Canada there were a few people—just a handful—who, not wishing or not daring to oppose the agreement, took refuge in complaining of the way in which it was made, or of the people who had made it. In England it was acclaimed at once, without these local qualifications. It was realized there that it helped Britain when she most needed aid. It was realized that it was not just a coincidence that joint defence, bases and destroyers were dealt with in a couple of weeks. It was realized too that our Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) had played a leading part in bringing about this, the greatest act of cooperation among English speaking peoples since the war of independence. Here is what a writer in the *London Spectator* said, in the issue of September 6:

A Canadian soldier to whom I gave a lift on Sunday reminded me of something I ought to have commented on before, the extent of the debt that the whole commonwealth owes to Mr. Mackenzie King, the Prime Minister of Canada, for the part he has played in cementing relations between the commonwealth and the United States. At earlier stages in his parliamentary career Mr. King has been

[Mr. Claxton.]

bitterly criticized by his opponents for what was regarded as his too "pro-American" attitude. The harvest that attitude, so far as it existed, is bearing now is such as to close all cavillers' mouths. Canada seems always destined to be the link and the interpreter between Great Britain and the United States, and it has never filled that role more effectively or more valuably than to-day. That is due in no small measure to the personal friendship between the Canadian Prime Minister and the American president which rids contacts between them, whether by telephone or in the flesh, of every vestige of formality.

As far as I have read it, the English press was unanimous to the same effect. Some of it went much further.

The concluding sentence of the passage I read explains the feeling that some Americans had that some Canadians might prefer the reelection of President Roosevelt. We certainly congratulate him most heartily on his reelection. But we would equally have congratulated Mr. Willkie and ourselves had he been favoured by the electors; for, despite the temptations of a political campaign, there seemed to us to be no fundamental difference in the declared policies of the two candidates so far as they affected us. They wanted to give all aid to Britain short of war, and that seems to be the view of the great majority of the people of the United States.

We are grateful for the bottom of our hearts for what the United States is doing.

A few days after the announcement of the exchange of destroyers for bases, the following telegram was sent by Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister, on September 13:

I am touched by the personal kindness of your telegram and all our people are cheered and fortified to feel that Canada is with the mother country heart and soul. The fine Canadian divisions which are standing on guard with us will play a notable part should the enemy succeed in setting foot on our shores. I am very glad to have this opportunity of thanking you personally for all you have done for the common cause and especially in promoting the harmony of sentiment throughout the new world. This deep understanding will be a dominant factor in the rescue of Europe from a relapse into the dark ages.

On behalf of the government and people of the United Kingdom I send you heartfelt thanks for your memorable message.

Canada has not only helped Britain by promoting harmony of sentiment on this continent, but that very harmony, by strengthening Canada, has increased her own capacity to help Britain.

Think now of what has happened at home. Canada entered the war united, and the way in which we entered the war, by a separate declaration, was of the utmost importance in securing the unity which resulted. It was important in Canada among those people who put Canada first; it was important in the