

The following day, June 22, the subject was discussed for the fourth time in this House, as follows:

Hon. Raoul Dandurand: My right honourable friend yesterday asked me whether I was in a position to answer a certain question. Last week he asked me whether the British Government had made a request to the Government of Canada to establish a training school for flyers here. I answered him that no such request had been made. Yesterday my right honourable friend asked whether any conversations on the subject had taken place.

Requests have been received from the British Government during the past year regarding short-service commissions for Canadians in the United Kingdom Air Force, and the Canadian Government has co-operated in making the arrangements proposed.

That, I suppose, was a kind of red herring. It had nothing to do with the question. My honourable friend went on:

No requests have been received from the British Government for the establishment in Canada of an air school or other agency of the United Kingdom Air Force. Some informal conversations have taken place with persons who did not indicate they had been authorized or instructed by the British Government to make any proposals.

I direct special attention to this statement he then made:

It is not customary or desirable to refer to inquiries of this description.

It was not "customary or desirable" that they should even be mentioned! In other words, it was none of our business! My honourable friend added:

Should any such proposals be made by the Government of the United Kingdom, the Canadian Government would of course be prepared to discuss them with that Government, and at the proper time to make its position known to the Canadian people.

I then asked:

Would the honourable leader of the Government state whether the persons with whom the Government had conversations were Canadians or citizens of the British Isles?

To this my honourable friend replied:

It seems to me that informal conversations can hardly form the basis of an inquiry in this Chamber or the other when they are not followed by some official action.

If the British Government's suggestion is declined, that is no business of the Canadian Parliament! My honourable friend added these words to his statement:

I simply submit that as my own answer to my right honourable friend; not as an answer from the Government.

The matter was pursued that day in the following manner:

Right Hon. Mr. Meighen: What I am getting at is this. Informal conversations may be just as important as if all the formalities in the world were attached. It depends on whom they

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN:

were with. Will the honourable leader of the Government say whether the informal conversations were not with a person who might reasonably have been expected to be feeling out the position of this Government on behalf of the Government of Britain?

Hon. Mr. Dandurand: I cannot answer the query of my right honourable friend as to whom they were with. It would strike me as extraordinary that informal conversations should produce rumours which would reach this Chamber or the other and form the basis for a query as to the action of the Government on such conversations.

Right Hon. Mr. Meighen: I do not see anything extraordinary about that.

On July 1, 1938, the last day of that year's session, this subject came up again in a debate in the other Chamber, and with the permission of the House I should like to read briefly—but as much as anyone wants—from a statement of the Prime Minister. The subject having come up at the instance of the then Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister was, as will be seen from the report, incensed that any news of these conversations should have got out. Whether for the purpose of wreaking vengeance on an informant, I know not, but he did his utmost to find out where the news came from, and sought to pour abuse on anyone who would not disclose the source of his information—as if the source were important, and not the information itself. He said this:

Confidential and informal exploratory conversations with respect to training of British air pilots have taken place, but nothing has developed which it was felt warranted a statement of policy.

I will inquire in a moment whether policy had not already been determined and concealed from the people of Canada and their representatives.

Now I will quote something more. A radio speech was made by the Prime Minister on the eighth day of March this year. I have here the Globe and Mail's report of the next day, which says it was a fifteen-minute speech. The heading is, "King denies he delayed air scheme," and the report in part reads:

In May of 1938, the Prime Minister said, Sir Francis Floud, then British High Commissioner in Canada, told him the British Government "wished to explore the possibility of sending to Canada, for further training in Canada, some British air pilots who had already received training in the United Kingdom."

I hope honourable members have noted the language. The British Government "wished to explore the possibility" of getting done that which they desired done. Then the report goes on:

The British Government had wished to ascertain if there would be any objection to such training in Canada in establishments to be owned, maintained and controlled by Britain.

"I did not gather from him"—