

afforded by the league, that it does not operate automatically, and that the question whether an attempt is to be made to set its sanctions or war provisions in action depends in last analysis on whether influential European members of the League wish to invoke these provisions.

A third course that might be advocated is to say we will advise Great Britain as to what course she should follow, so that we will not be involved in the consequences of a policy we thought wrong. I believe that position has been stated many times in this house.

This attitude has more to be said in its favour. Occasions arise where consultation is both necessary and possible, and where it will be open to each government and sometimes necessary for each government to indicate its attitude. The difficulty, however, is that a United Kingdom government, for example, must be responsible to its own people for its actions. The direct and main responsibility for its policy must rest with its own parliament. They are closer to the danger point, and must bear the main brunt of any misjudgment or failure. They might be prepared to take advice which fell in with their own views; but otherwise they would find it difficult to do so unless the adviser could guarantee them against the consequences. It could not be anticipated that Canada and South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland would always advise the same way. The necessity of the United Kingdom consulting certain other powers in Europe would not be affected. The danger would arise of intervening in controversies between the government and the opposition in Westminster. In many cases, there is not time or opportunity for such consultation or advice. A policy is not adopted at one stroke; it is the sum of many actions, accumulating decisions on what often appear points of detail, ordinary routine. Daily and sometimes hourly new situations must be faced, conversations held, decisions taken.

Again, it has been urged that we should say we will declare here and now our neutrality in any future conflict, decline to take part under any circumstances in any conflict in which the United Kingdom may be engaged.

I stated the government's position on this proposal last session in the following terms. I have stated it in similar terms in other sessions:

This would amount to tying the hands of parliament regardless of the circumstances of the war or the participants, what interests of

Canada may or may not be involved. Over and over again we have laid down the principle that so far as participation by Canada in war is concerned, it will be for our parliament to decide. Having taken that attitude in respect to participation, I think we might well take a similar attitude with respect to neutrality. At the present time there are no commitments, so far as Canada is concerned, to participate in any war. Equally there are no commitments . . . whereby we agree to remain neutral under all circumstances. The policy of the government with respect to participation and neutrality is that parliament will decide what is to be done.

That position has not been changed. To make such a declaration would be unjustified by the policies of British governments. It would be an unwise encouragement to potential aggressors.

Finally, we may take the position that parliament will decide upon our course when and if the emergency arises, in the light of all the circumstances at the time. In the meantime we should endeavour to keep informed upon the situation, to keep in touch with the United Kingdom and other countries striving for peace, to carry through a reasonable and effective defence program of our own, to support any constructive program of conciliation and removal of economic barriers to peace, and to strive in our own relations to build up friendships which will serve our need and the need of others.

I made a statement at Geneva in September, 1936, in the presence of British ministers and representatives of other nations, which later, on January 25, 1937, I declared was "a statement of the present administration's policy and the policy which the present administration intends to follow as long as it remains in office." It was as follows:

The nations of the British commonwealth are held together by ties of friendship, by similar political institutions, and by common attachment to democratic ideals, rather than by commitments to join together in war. The Canadian parliament reserves to itself the right to declare, in the light of the circumstances existing at the time, to what extent, if at all, Canada will participate in conflicts in which other members of the commonwealth may be engaged.

The Canadian House of Commons by unanimous resolution has made the adoption of undertakings to apply either military or economic sanctions subject to the approval of parliament.

What I have said and quoted—

I am still quoting what I said at Geneva two years ago.

—does not mean that in no circumstances would the Canadian people be prepared to share in an action against an aggressor; there have been no absolute commitments either for or against participation in war or other forms of force. It does mean that any decision on the part of Canada to participate in war will have to be taken by the parliament or people of Canada