

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 14, 1955

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

HON. MEMBER FOR FORT WILLIAM—BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, may I have a special privilege, which I think would be very graciously granted to me by all hon. members, and that is to express in their name as well as my own our sincere congratulations and our best wishes to the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McIvor).

Mr. Daniel McIvor (Fort William): Mr. Speaker, coming from where it does, and with its feeling of sincerity, I feel somewhat flabbergasted in accepting the congratulations extended by the Prime Minister. I am happy to be living, and thankful that I have a real appetite for everything that is going to happen, even for big speeches from the opposition.

COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

PERSONNEL OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Mr. W. G. Weir (Portage-Neepawa) moved:

That Messrs. Benidickson, Byrne, Cameron (Nanaimo), Cannon, Churchill, Decore, Deschatelets, Dupuis, Fleming, Garland, Gauthier (Nickel Belt), Hellyer, Henry, Jutras, Lafontaine, Macdonnell, MacEachen, Macnaughton, McLeod, Michener, Monteith, Power (St. John's West), Stuart (Charlotte), Thatcher, Tucker and Yuill constitute the special committee appointed Tuesday, February 8th, to consider such of the estimates as may be referred to it and that the provisions of standing order 65 be suspended in relation thereto.

Motion agreed to.

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

CONFERENCE OF PRIME MINISTERS—STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I undertook on Thursday to make a brief statement to the house about the meeting of the prime ministers of the commonwealth countries, from which the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) and I have just returned.

Perhaps I should begin by reminding hon. members of the statement made by Sir Winston Churchill on November 4 last when he announced that it was proposed to hold this meeting. He said:

Many events of great importance in the international field have taken place since our last meeting at the time of the coronation. These will be among the principal subjects for our consideration when, as we have now agreed, a meeting of commonwealth prime ministers is held in London, opening January 31.

These words, I think, indicate quite accurately both the scope and the limitations of such a meeting. The meeting was not called because there was some particular problem of concern to all the member countries of the commonwealth which we were attempting to settle. The meeting was not called to make decisions on any question. It was intended to be, and I suggest that that is all such a meeting could be, an opportunity for a full and frank exchange of views about the many events of great importance in the international field to which the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom referred, and of course any other matter of common concern which might be raised.

I am sure all hon. members will now have read the two communiqués which were printed as an appendix to last Thursday's *Hansard*. They will have found in these communiqués a summary indication of all the matters which were considered by both the plenary meetings and the additional meetings arranged to discuss regional defence problems. They will agree that all these matters were important and worthy of the careful consideration they received.

There is in reality very little to be said that is not already set out in the communiqués. I notice that disappointment has been expressed in certain quarters at the lack of more positive results from the meeting of prime ministers. Such disappointment is obviously because of the mistaken conception of what the meetings were intended to accomplish and of how they do produce their beneficial results.

The commonwealth is not a political organization under centralized direction or control, and I believe we are all agreed that any attempt now to transform the commonwealth into that kind of union would be unsuccessful and might destroy the free association which has been maintained successfully,