

U.S.S.R.-Canada Protocol

not surprised to hear this from the NDP, but when we hear it from the Prime Minister and some of his colleagues there is cause for alarm. No wonder there is apprehension in the United States and elsewhere.

The Prime Minister has the habit of expressing himself in riddles, similes or metaphores. Not too long ago he said that being next to the United States of America is like sleeping with an elephant. If nothing else, an elephant is rather pleasant, although it can show a temperate nature and be a bit clumsy occasionally. We all agree with that. Perhaps it might be well to remind the Prime Minister that there may be difficulties getting into bed with an elephant, but getting into bed with a Russian bear with rather carnivorous habits is quite another matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Watch your chastity-belt.

Mr. Nesbitt: Some members of the House, including the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) and others on the government side, have had some experience in dealing with the Russians. If nothing else, the Russians are very practical people. They do not spend vast sums of money on entertaining and huge, spontaneous demonstrations unless they have something in mind. It is well known that one of the prime objectives of Russian foreign policy is to drive a wedge between Canada and the United States. This is not because they give a hoot about us: to them, we are just another Belgium. It is because they wish to damage American defences on the continent and American influence and prestige abroad. That is the main objective of the Russians. When the Prime Minister of our country is wined and dined, receives flowers, huge groups and the works, it is not because the Russians enjoy spending money and putting on shows. It is for one purpose. If one can pay any attention to the reports on the remarks of the Prime Minister, they have certainly succeeded.

As the Prime Minister said, protocol is very elastic; it is what we want to make of it. From what we have seen and heard so far, it is apparent what he wants to make of it. I hope we get an explanation when his eminence arrives this afternoon. I presume that he will be here very shortly. It should be remembered that the Prime Minister—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nesbitt: I do not think anyone in the House is more pleased than me to welcome back the right hon. gentleman from his trip to the Soviet Union. Perhaps the right hon. member has not yet heard about it, but as has already been pointed out we have a lot of questions. We would like a lot of information about his observations of the Soviet Union. I hope that the Prime Minister, who has now rejoined us, will be able to give us some of his observations on what he did there, and what the indications are vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the United States. I am happy to give the floor to the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, may I begin by thanking all hon. members for their welcome and to say how happy I am to be back in Canada. I know that I speak in this respect on behalf of my parliamentary travelling companions, my parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Parkdale (Mr. Haidasz) and the hon. member for High Park (Mr. Deakon), who were of great assistance while I was in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union occupies a vast land mass extending through 11 time zones—some of which I am still feeling—with climates varying from the desert heat of central Asia to the frigid temperatures of the Arctic. While in the U.S.S.R., I was taken by the Soviet government to six cities in addition to Moscow. We travelled some 12,400 kilometres while doing so. Two of those cities, Murmansk and Norilsk, were within the Arctic circle, the largest communities in the world that far north. They offered evidence of the advantages to be gained by Canada in the development of our north through closer co-operation and exchanges with the Soviet Union.

This visit to the U.S.S.R., which concluded just three hours ago, was the first of a Canadian Prime Minister, while in office, to that country. It was by no means, however, the first occasion on which a minister of the Canadian government has travelled in the Soviet Union. Our relations with that country have been developing and increasing in complexity since Canada first opened an embassy in Moscow in the early 1940s.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Hon. members will recall that Canada has long had treaty arrangements with the Soviet government. Our first trade agreement was signed in 1956. Since that time, in every year except 1969 we have enjoyed a favourable and often substantial balance of trade in our favour. I might add that while in Moscow our trade in wheat was reviewed, including the Soviet assurance that when the U.S.S.R. has requirements to import wheat, it will in the first instance apply to Canada as a preferred source of supply. In January of this year the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) concluded an important agreement with the U.S.S.R. on the industrial application of science and technology, an agreement which reflects the recognition in the U.S.S.R. of Canada's increasing stature as the owner of important, advanced technology and of our awareness of the important progress made by the Soviets in a number of fields.

This increasing interest in the Soviet Union has not been confined to the government. A wide range of contacts has been established in recent years by persons who recognize the Soviet Union as a near neighbour, as a country of great influence, as a marketplace and trading partner of immense potential, as the home of wide cultural attainments and as a fascinating land. I believe we have much to gain in this process of increasing awareness and I am pleased that visitors to the U.S.S.R. in recent months included the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) and the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker).