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DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

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Parliament in Session:

A motion of non-confidence in Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his Cabinet; a hint from Mr. King that a general election might be imminent; and a bleak picture of the situation in Europe, highlighted discussion in the House of Commons yesterday. Mr. Bracken, Leader of the Opposition, moved the vote of non-confidence charging the Administration with being "wilfully negligent of the public interest" but the motion was defeated by a vote of 139-69. In reply to Mr. Bracken, the Prime Minister asked "Is there any better test of the confidence of the people than that which is given either at byelections or at general elections?" He pointed out at the same time that the Government had won the last five byelections. The local press took from Mr. King's reference to elections that a general one might be held soon.

In continuing his remarks, the Prime Minister defended the Government policy of taking up the Geneva Trade Agreements at the present time and maintained his stand that the issues of living costs, the farm crisis and the veteran's plight could not be aired in debate on the Speech from the Throne before the Christmas recess.

Mr. King reviewed his recent trip abroad in gravest tones drawing Parliament's attention to the world-wide conflict between democracy and Communism. He declared that everything is being done to stir up unrest in Western Europe to make it impossible for the Marshall plan to operate. While he applauded efforts at recovery in this post-war period, he reported "deplorable conditions" in France through "Communitistic influence"; and despite great improvement over war years, privation, lack of food and materials in London. (Various)

Excise Tax Off Certain Goods:

Electric and gas stoves, ranges and heaters will be exempted from the new tax announced November 17 Finance Minister Abbott has announced. He added that it would remain on electric or gas refrigerators, refrigerating components, oil burners and oil burning equipment when they are intended for household use or for places of amusements such as rinks, halls, clubs and auditoriums.

Commuted Sentence Stands:

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable L.S. St. Laurent, has issued a statement regarding the commutation of the sentences of two Japanese war criminals who had been convicted of war crimes involving the inhumane treatment of Canadian service personnel at Hong Kong. The accused, Col. Isao Tokunaga and Capt. Shunkichi Saito, were sentenced to death by hanging but the Acting General Officer Commanding at Hong Kong later commuted the former's sentence to life imprisonment and the latter's to 20 years imprisonment. Hon. Mr. St. Laurent's statement noted that in reply to a request from the Department of National Defence through the High Commissioner for Canada in the United Kingdom, United Kingdom authorities have replied that the commutation of death sentence is a matter within the discretion of the Confirming Officer made after careful consideration of the available evidence