

It was at this critical time in our history that a meeting was arranged, at the suggestion of our Prime Minister, with President Roosevelt, to decide what steps should be taken to protect the Western Hemisphere against German aggression. The meeting took place on August 17th in the private railway car of President Roosevelt on a siding near the station of Ogdensburg, New York. At the close of the meeting on August 18th the President and Prime Minister issued the following brief statement of policy:

"The Prime Minister and the President have discussed the mutual problems of defence in relation to the safety of Canada and the United States.

"It has been agreed that a Permanent Joint Board on Defence shall be set up at once by the two countries.

"This Permanent Joint Board on Defence shall commence immediate studies relating to sea, land and air problems including personnel and material.

"It will consider in the broad sense the defence of the north half of the Western Hemisphere.

"The Permanent Joint Board on Defence will consist of four or five members from each country, most of them from the services. It will meet shortly."

That is all there is. Perhaps in passing I might ask you to bear in mind the clarity and brevity of that statement. It seems to me to be a good illustration of the well known fact that when the parties to an agreement both wish it to work and both feel that the other party to it intends that it shall be carried out in its spirit as well as in conformity with its text, that text does not have to be a very extended one.

The Ogdensburg Declaration of President Roosevelt and Mr. King is not a startling new development. It was in fact the logical outcome of earlier public statements by these two statesmen. Two years before, President Roosevelt, in accepting an Honorary Degree from Queen's University, said:

"Canada is part of the sisterhood of the British Empire. I give to you assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire."

A few days later, Mr. King, in his speech at Woodbridge, Ontario, replied:

"We, too, have our obligations as a good and friendly neighbour, and one of them is to see that, at our own instance, our country is made as immune from attack or possible invasion as we can reasonably be expected to make it and that, should the occasion ever arise, enemy forces should not be able to pursue their way, either by land, sea or air, to the United States across Canadian territory."

It is not my intention to review the work of this Board during war. It is sufficient to say that from its establishment until the end of the war the Board acted as a liaison organization between the two governments with the aim of arriving at practical solutions of common defence problems. The Board was quickly set up and as early as August 1940, it dealt with the preparation of a plan for the defence of Canada and the United States. The plan was accepted by the two governments and became the framework for North American defence during the period of hostilities. At the end of the war we had to consider the future of the Board itself and fate of the plan it had prepared.