

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

Friday, July 12, 1946

The house met at three o'clock.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Seventeenth and eighteenth reports of special committee on veterans affairs.—Mr. Tucker.

Second and final report of joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons on a distinctive national flag.—Mr. Harris (Grey-Bruce).

PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

ATTENDANCE OF PRIME MINISTER—CANADIAN DELEGATION

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have told hon. members of the invitation extended by the government of France, acting in the name of the council of foreign ministers, to the government of Canada to send a delegation to represent Canada at the conference which will open in Paris on July 29, to consider the terms of peace with Italy and with Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland.

The preparations for this conference have been a long time under way. The decision of the council of foreign ministers to convoke a conference is, in itself, evidence that the preparations have resulted in a substantial measure of agreement among the great powers.

The conference now arranged represents a further stage in the process of working out the treaties of peace. In this stage all the countries which have made their military contribution to the defeat of the axis powers will have an opportunity to express their views on the terms of the peace settlement, in so far as it relates to eastern and southern Europe. It is important to note that the proceedings of the conference which convenes in Paris on July 29 will be concerned only with a consideration of the terms of peace with Italy and with the axis satellites of eastern and southern Europe.

The Paris conference is not to be confused with a peace conference to determine the final settlement with respect to Germany. While the Paris conference is of importance in what it may accomplish in creating a more peaceful atmosphere in Europe, it will be concerned neither with the treaties of peace with the major enemy countries, Germany and Japan, nor with international problems as a whole, such as are the concern of the united nations. The plans for a conference respecting Germany and the date at which it may be held have still to be determined. It is not possible at the moment even to suggest a probable date. Nor, as I have said, will the conference which meets in Paris on the 29th instant be concerned, directly or indirectly, with the conference which presumably will be held ere long with respect to Japan and Pacific questions.

Although this is still one world, and its peace is indivisible, it is apparent that some countries are much more closely and directly concerned than others with the specific solutions of questions of territorial boundaries, population transfers, war damage indemnities, and so on. Such will be the class or kind of subject to be discussed at the forthcoming Paris conference. They obviously are of primary interest to the European countries. In these circumstances, Canada's principal interest and duty will, it seems to me, lie in helping the countries more directly concerned to work out agreed solutions which are fair, and will be likely to endure. Our national interest is to see that, as far as possible, the peace treaties are based upon broad and enduring principles of justice and equity. Canada is not seeking territory or reparations, but we do want a lasting peace. With this conception of our role in mind, and with the proceedings of the Paris conference restricted to the subjects I have outlined, the government does not feel that it would be either necessary or appropriate to have a large Canadian delegation.