

ould give that matter the same kind of consideration, as we gave the idea of a North Atlantic Pact.

In a review of international affairs, no matter how brief, is not possible to ignore completely international economic questions, Mr. Chairman. Indeed, in this field it is not easy to know where political questions end and economic ones begin. The importance of sound economic and social policies in our relation to communism and to the communist states is obvious, because our longest longrun defence against communism is wise and progressive social and economic policies. The same importance attaches to the economic relationships between the free democratic states. Economic co-operation along the right lines can and should bring us closer together. The lack of such co-operation can divide friendly states. There are signs now that, if we are not careful, our unity and ability to work together may be weakened by international economic difficulties.

If, for instance, we let the free world freeze into dollar and sterling areas, between which trade relations and commercial intercourse become difficult, that might ultimately prejudice political relationships. And so we are becoming, all of us, I think, more conscious than ever of these international economic difficulties as we realize that the post-war dollar assistance programme may run out before the countries which have been assisted have recovered from the destructions and the dislocations of the war to a point where they can balance by their own efforts their trade with more fortunate countries such as Canada at a satisfactory level. What should be done in these circumstances by all of the countries concerned, and not merely by our own, is probably the most important question in the whole field of international economic affairs today. My hon. friends opposite keep emphasizing that economic and trade difficulties are increasing. They criticize the government because we have not done more to remove them--especially because we have done so little, as they put it, to maintain and develop trade between Canada and the sterling area. I think that they minimize the external problems which have caused these difficulties and maximize the alleged deficiencies of the government, its sins of omission and commission in dealing with them. Yet, while inveighing against the government, what remedy do they suggest? At the present time, as I understand it, their principal proposal is a Commonwealth economic conference, as a possible cure for trade ills from which we may be suffering.

Well, we have had a good many Commonwealth meetings during the last couple of years, and many of them--indeed most of them--have concerned trade. But hon. members opposite say that these meetings have been merely the concern of peregrinating, perambulating representatives, acting on their own by sporadic individual efforts. But what we want now, they go on to say, is a full-scale, large-scale Commonwealth economic conference of the 1932 variety, with everybody there, to discuss everything--not merely the minister for external affairs in Ceylon drinking tea, but everybody, in London, selling food--and, according to the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton), even discussing questions of migration and emigration. In short, bigger and better conferences, where decisions will be taken on the spot, possibly by a sort of serial super-cabinet conference.

Well, I suggest, that our way is better, where, in addition to these formal conferences--and they are of course desirable at times--ministers concerned, after full discussion in cabinet, where policy is agreed upon, meet, whenever occasion requires it, their opposite numbers in London or elsewhere to try to solve particular problems by arrangements which are then ratified by the