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COMMONS

2612

seizures. The eastern border and Balkan states have found it equally necessary to take stock of their individual situation, and to seek to prevent a conflict between Hungary and Rumania over the once Hungarian territory the latter received as part of the peace settlement. The Soviet Union keeps watch on both its western and its far-eastern borders.

These general consultations and local activities are not yet concluded, and it is too early to surmise with any certainty what proposals or procedure will evolve.

I come now to matters which are at the moment and which for some time to come are likely to be of deepest concern to us all. Fortunately neither the September crisis nor the crisis of the present month resulted in war. But there may be occasions when war will not be averted, when a great conflict may break out in Europe. It is asked, what will be Canada's attitude in that case?

So far as the present government is concerned, the position has been made clear repeatedly, and there is no change in that position to-day. If Canada is faced by the necessity of making a decision on the most serious and momentous issue that can face a nation, whether or not to take part in war, the principle of responsible government which has been our guide and our goal for a century past, demands that that decision be made by the parliament of Canada. Equally, the system of government we have inherited from Britain, of the close and essential relations between the legislature and the executive, makes it the duty of the government to propose to parliament the course which in regard to particular issues it considers should be adopted, and to stand or fall by the decision.

It has been contended in some quarters that this policy is not sufficiently definite and absolute. What government to-day, may I ask, is making absolute and irrevocable statements of the policy it will follow, its people will follow, regardless of the contingency, the issues at stake, the position of other countries? I had occasion only a few days ago to refer in this house to the statement made by Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham as recently as March 17th, in which the Prime Minister said:

I am not prepared to engage this country by new and unspecified commitments, operating under conditions which cannot now be foreseen.

Speaking as the Prime Minister of Canada, I wish to say that I am not prepared any more than is the Prime Minister of Great

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Britain to engage this country by new and unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot now be foreseen.

Canada's attitude as to automatic commitments involving possible or actual participation in war has been asserted time and again both in this parliament and at Geneva. Whether it has been in reference to the application of sanctions under Article 16 of the covenant of the league or to participation in wars apart altogether from the league, Canada's position has been the same, namely, that in either case the approval of parliament will be required.

At the seventeenth session of the Assembly of the League of Nations, in September, 1936, in the presence of British ministers and representatives of other nations of the British commonwealth, and of other member countries of the league, I stated the position as I then understood it, very clearly. No exception so far as I am aware was taken at Geneva, at the time, to that statement nor has exception been taken to it since, by any political party at Ottawa, though the statement of Canada's position as therein set forth has been drawn to the attention of parliament at each subsequent session.

I feel I cannot do better at this time than to quote once more essential paragraphs of the statement making clear that they define, as accurately as I believe it is possible to define it, the position of the present government in the matter of Canada's participation in war whether it arises out of our membership in the league of nations or our membership in the British commonwealth of nations.

The paragraphs I regard as pertinent are the following:

There is another factor which inevitably influences Canadian opinion on many league policies, and particularly on the question of automatic obligations to the use of force in international disputes. I have in mind our experience as a member of the British commonwealth of nations. The nations of the British commonwealth are held together by ties of friendship, by similar political institutions, and by common attachment to democratic ideals, rather than by commitments to join together in war. The Canadian parliament reserves to itself the right to declare, in the light of the circumstances existing at the time, to what extent, if at all, Canada will participate in conflicts in which other members of the commonwealth may be engaged.

There is a general unwillingness of peoples to incur obligations which they realize they may not be able in time of crisis to fulfil, obligations to use force and to use it at any place, any time, in circumstances unforeseen, and in disputes over whose origin or whose development they have had little or no control. This difficulty of automatic intervention increases rather than decreases when conflicts

C 275834

MARCH 30, 1939

2613

tend to become struggles between classes, between economic systems, between social philosophies and, in some instances between religious faiths, as well as between states.

The Canadian House of Commons by unanimous resolution has made the adoption of undertakings to apply either military or economic sanctions subject to the approval of parliament.

What I have said and quoted does not mean that in no circumstances would the Canadian people be prepared to share in action against an aggressor; there have been no absolute commitments either for or against participation in war or other forms of force. It does mean that any decision on the part of Canada to participate in war will have to be taken by the parliament or people of Canada in the light of all existing circumstances; circumstances of the day as they exist in Canada, as well as in the areas involved.

I cannot accept the view which is being urged in some quarters to-day, that regardless of what government or party may be in office, regardless of what its policy may be, regardless of what the issue itself may come to be, this country should say here and now that Canada is prepared to support whatever may be proposed by the government at Westminster.

The international situation changes from year to year, sometimes from week to week; governments change, their personnel changes, policies change. Absolute statements of policy, absolute undertakings to follow other governments, whatever the situation, are out of the question. At the same time the decisions that would be made by our government and parliament, like those of other governments and other parliaments, are not incalculable, not matters of chance and whim. Much of course would depend on the special circumstances of the day. But equally important in determining our attitude are certain permanent factors of interest, of sentiment, of opinion, which set the limits within any feasible and united policy must be determined.

May I refer to some of these known, in fact, obvious factors.

The first factor is the one that is present and dominant in the policy of every other country, from Britain and Sweden to Argentina and the United States. I mean the existence of a national feeling and the assumption that first place will be given to the interests, immediate, or long range, of the country itself. The growth of national feeling in Canada has been inevitable at a time when nationalism has come to dominate every quarter of the world. It is a more defensible and enduring growth than in many other lands. It is not based on any desire for expansion or revenge. This half continent affords

ample room and the material basis for the building of a great nation. It is clear that this widely scattered dominion can only be welded together by the action of a positive and distinctive Canadian patriotism. A strong and dominant national feeling is not a luxury in Canada, it is a necessity. Without it this country could not exist. A divided Canada can be of little help to any country, and least of all to itself. The national feeling has found political expression in the steady growth of self-government, at first in domestic, later in external affairs. It has stood the test and the strain of economic depression and of the local differences to which depression gives a temporary importance. We are and will remain Canadians, devoted, first and last, to the interests of Canada, but Canadians, I hope, who will be able to take a long range as well as a short range view of what Canada's interests require.

In many, but certainly not in all cases, this growth of national feeling has strengthened the desire for a policy which its defenders call mind one's own business and which its critics call isolationism. Assuming, it is urged, that Canadians like other people will put their own interests first, what do our interests demand, what amount of knight errantry abroad do our resources permit? Canada, it is contended is not a country of unlimited powers; it has not the capacity to stand indefinite strains. We have tremendous tasks to do at home, in housing the people, in caring for the aged and helpless, in relieving drought and unemployment, in building roads, in meeting our heavy burden of debt, in making provision for Canada's defence, and in bringing our standards of living and civilization to the levels our knowledge now makes possible. There is no great margin of realizable wealth for this purpose; we must, to a greater or less extent, choose between keeping our own house in order, and trying to save Europe and Asia. The idea that every twenty years this country should automatically and as a matter of course take part in a war overseas for democracy or self-determination of other small nations, that a country which has all it can do to run itself should feel called upon to save, periodically, a continent that cannot run itself, and to these ends risk the lives of its people, risk bankruptcy and political disunion, seems to many a nightmare and sheer madness.

A second enduring factor is our position as a North American nation, and particularly our neighbourhood to the United States. Geographically, that position has not changed in the past thirty or forty years, but our