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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Speaker: The Honourable GASPARD FAUTEUX

MONDAY, February 10, 1947.

The house met at three o'clock.

PEACE TREATIES

CANADA AND ITALY, ROUMANIA, HUNGARY AND BULGARIA TO BE SIGNED AT PARIS THIS DAY

Right Hon. L. S. ST. LAURENT (Secretary of State for External Affairs): To-day in Paris treaties of peace will be signed between Canada and four of her former enemies. From July to October of last year, Canada was represented at a conference in Paris which was called to consider draft peace treaties with Italy, Roumania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Finland. These treaties have now been completed, and in the ceremony of signature in Paris, Canada will be represented by the Canadian Ambassador to France, Major General Vanier. The treaties are subject to ratification and will come into force with respect to Canada when they have been approved by parliament and when an instrument of ratification has been deposited. The treaty with Bulgaria will not be signed by Canada, we were not at war with that country.

The Canadian delegation to the Paris conference was led by the right honourable the Prime Minister. The other members of the delegation were the Minister of National Defence, who at that time was minister of national health and welfare; the Canadian Ambassador to France and the Canadian Ambassador to the U.S.S.R.; the head of the Canadian military mission to Germany; Mr. N. A. Robertson, at that time Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Mr. Arnold Heeney, clerk of the Privy Council. These representatives were accompanied by several advisers from the Department of External Affairs. When the Prime Minister returned to Canada during the latter part of August, my colleague the Minister of National Defence assumed the leadership of the delegation.

The conference at Paris was restricted, through the terms of reference given it by the council of foreign ministers, to the function of examining draft peace treaties which had been prepared by the council and to making recommendations on these draft treaties for the further consideration of the four foreign ministers. No assurance was given to the seventeen states which joined the four great powers at Paris

that the recommendations of the conference would be accepted by the council of foreign ministers which was to prepare the final texts of the treaties. On the contrary, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Soviet Union and France came to the Paris conference committed to support those articles of the draft peace treaties on which previous agreement had been reached. It was only in respect of the unagreed articles, therefore, that the states attending the Paris conference were allowed any real freedom of action.

In these circumstances the opportunity given us to influence the settlements under discussion at Paris was not great. The Prime Minister in his opening address made known to the conference Canada's misgiving over procedures which permitted so limited a participation in the work of peace-making. Canada, he said, had a vital interest in these treaties and desired to see them established on principles of justice and equity which would lead to a lasting peace.

In spite of the limitations imposed on the conference at Paris, it was nonetheless possible for the Canadian delegation to make a valuable contribution to the drafting of the peace treaties, particularly in respect of articles which had not previously been agreed upon by the council of foreign ministers. The Paris conference was able to adopt, by the necessary two-thirds majority, a number of recommendations which were subsequently used in the New York meetings of the council of foreign ministers as a basis for discussion. The principles of these recommendations were in many cases adopted and incorporated in the final texts. Such important questions as the establishment of the free territory of Trieste, the freedom of the Danube, the settlement of disputes arising out of the interpretation or execution of the treaties, and the settlement of the amounts of reparation payable by the ex-enemies to the allies, were all of this category. The conference also did useful work in clarifying and improving the text of many articles in both agreed and unagreed sections of the treaties. In this connection, the present Minister of National Defence, in his capacity as chairman of the legal and drafting commission, made a particularly useful contribution to the conference.

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